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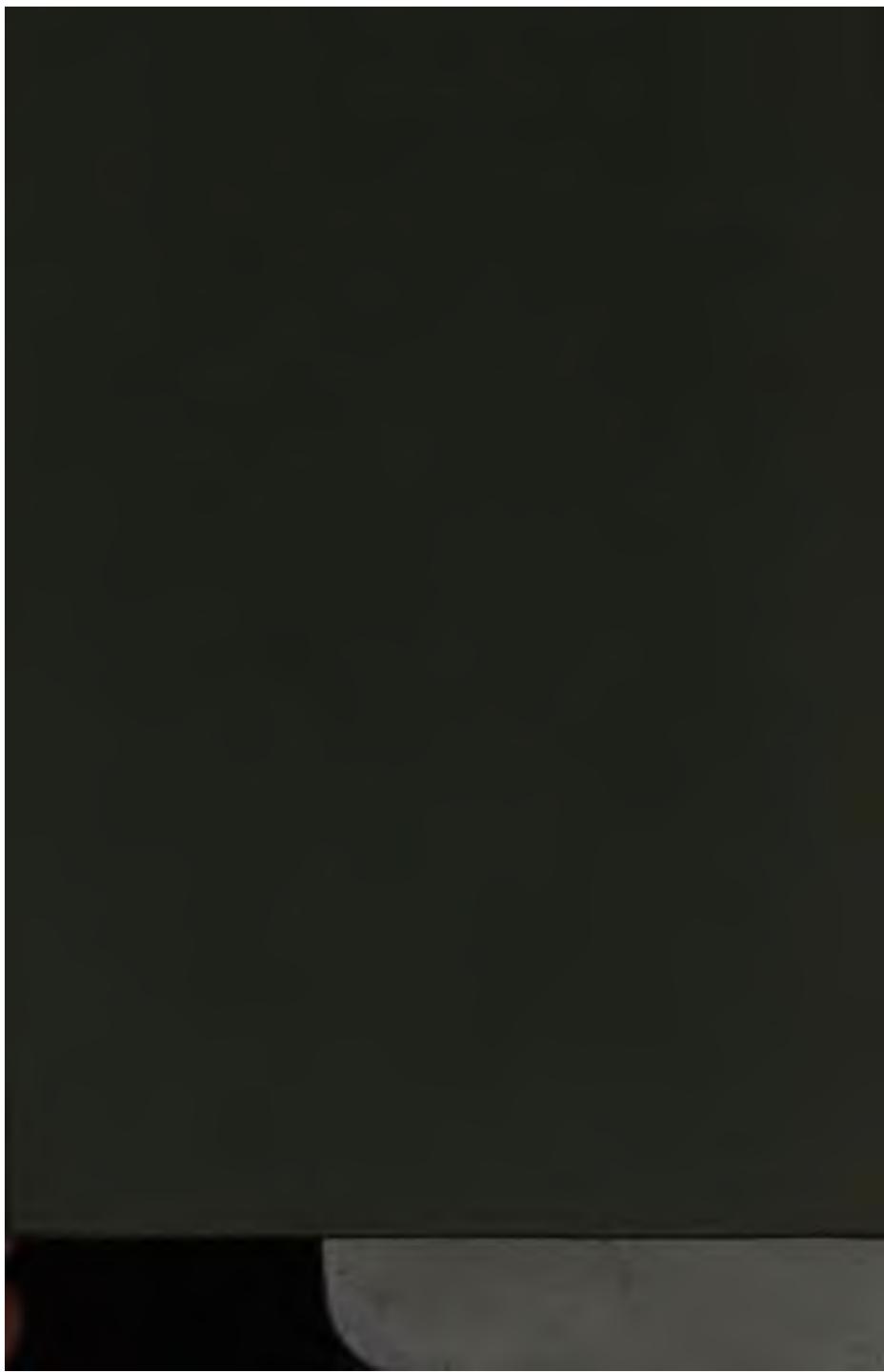
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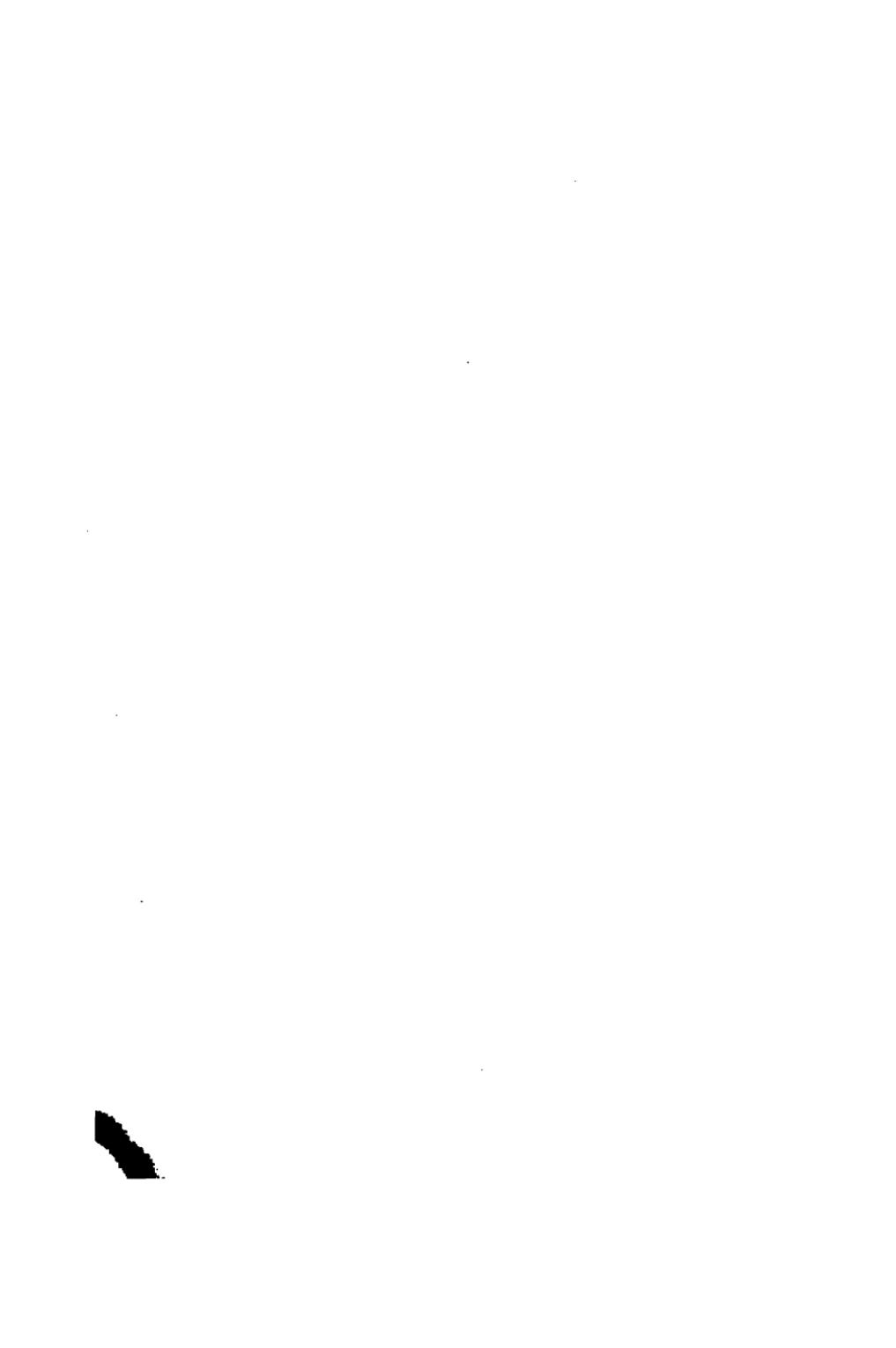
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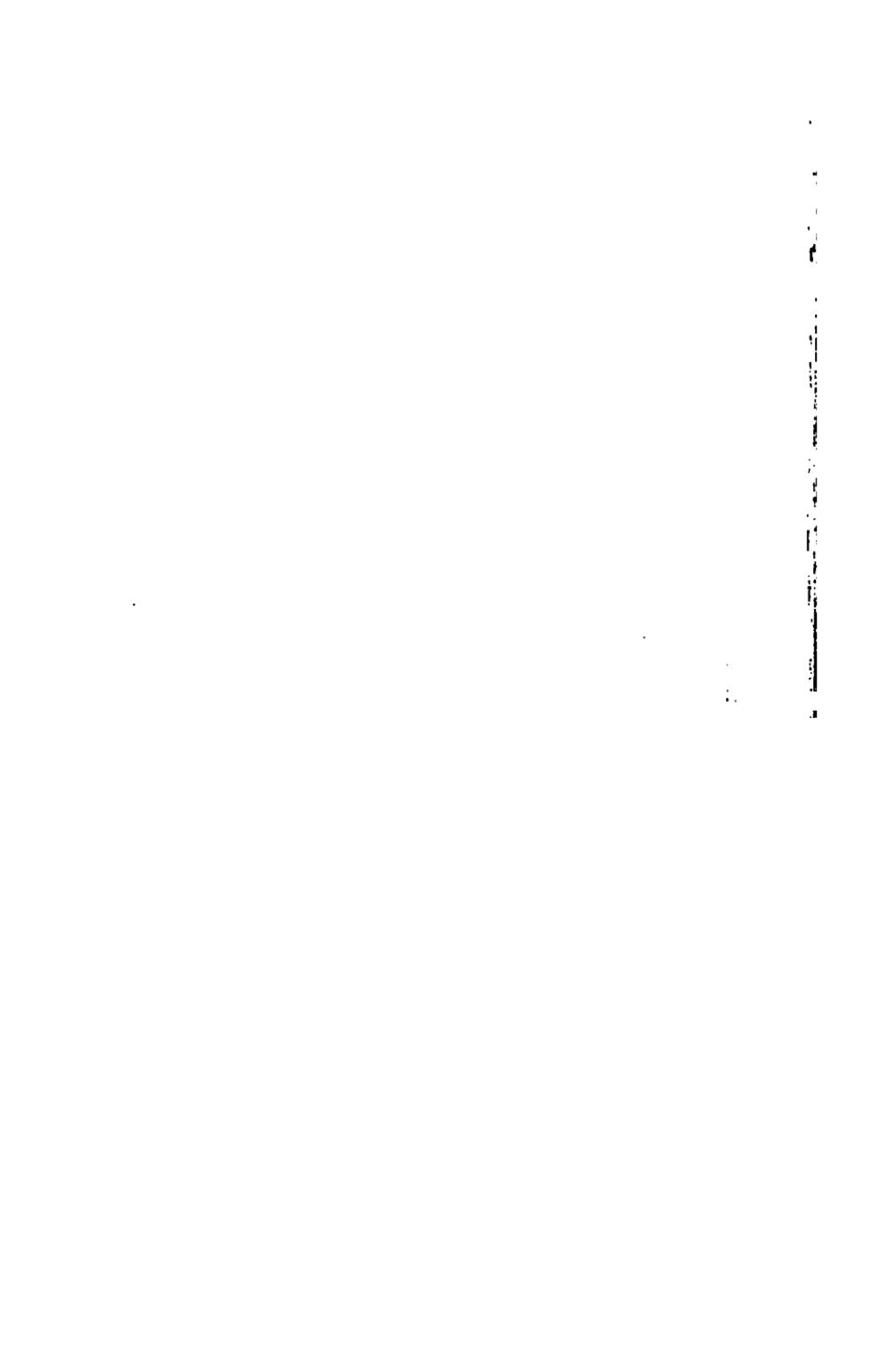












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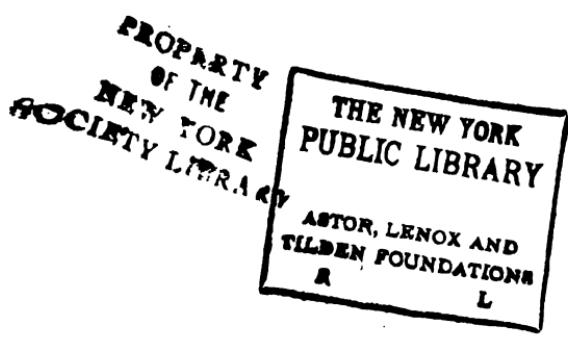
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

THE CALL OF THE OFFSHORE WIND.
Illustrated.

THE FIGHTING FLEETS. Five Months of
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THE CALL OF THE OFFSHORE WIND







GOD ALMIGHTY'S WIND IS CHEAPER THAN STEAM AND
ALWAYS WAS (page 6)

THE CALL
of the
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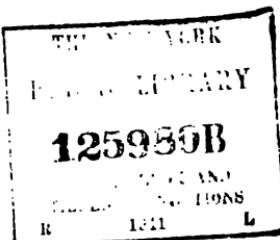
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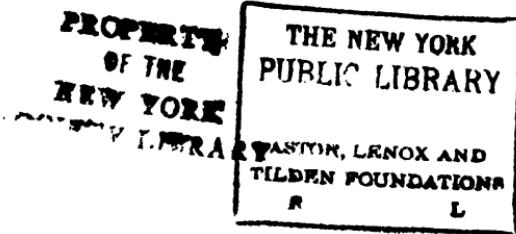
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From drawings by Sears Gallagher

THE CALL OF THE OFFSHORE WIND

CHAPTER I

AN OLD SHIPYARD AND YOUNG BLOOD

THE November morning was joyous with sunlight, but the easterly wind seemed a chill harbinger of winter when old Israel Fenwick sought the lee of a pile of hewn timbers in the shipyard and sat down, absently shaving a bit of pine with his knife. A shapeless gray hat was shoved back on his head, the mop of silvered hair disordered as usual. His face was smooth-shaven, massive, and burned a brick-red by exposure. This same aspect of a solidity that defied the crumbling processes of age was suggested by the thick-set figure whose hardened muscles had not begun to sag. Only in his eyes could the story be read, that look of wistful futility, of realization that the end of the passage is near, which the bravest heart cannot always dissemble.

It was wonderful to think that the lives of Israel Fenwick and his father had spanned eighty years of building wooden ships in the yard at Spring Haven where the Winnebasset River meets the tide of the Maine coast. Eighty years between them!

It meant that the elder Israel had whittled his models and chalked the patterns on the floor of the old loft before the first steamer challenged the roaring packets in the Atlantic trade, when snowy skysails in every sea proudly served notice that Columbia, not Britannia, ruled the wave.

Forgotten days and vanished glories, the incomparable epic of blue water, with few to mourn or care! The sooty box of a tramp freighter wallows over the long road where once the Flying Cloud or Westward Ho swept homeward-bound, save only a cathedral the loveliest, noblest fabrics ever wrought by man's handiwork.

To Israel Fenwick of the second generation had been bequeathed an honorable repute, together with shares in many vessels and savings soundly invested ashore. A master mind had taught him his trade and no other career occurred to him as possible. When the demand for square-riggers slackened and died, he turned to building schooners for the coast-wise trade, and so carried the yard along without serious adversity until he had passed middle age. Then the tide of his affairs began to ebb, so very slowly that he failed to comprehend the change.

The small schooner had also seen its day and seemed doomed to go under in the struggle for survival. The competition of steam was merciless, and the only hope of meeting it lay in the large fore-and-afters, five- and six-masted, with a capacity of

thousands instead of hundreds of tons of cargo. Fewer of these were needed, and therefore some yards must be idle. Israel Fenwick remembered when the river at Spring Haven was crowded with a score of yards engaged in building wooden vessels. One by one they had been dismantled and the grass covered their rotting timbers. Now his alone was left.

When no orders were in hand, it had been a simple matter to assemble the modest capital required to put a little three-master afloat and so keep the plant employed. According to ancient custom the estimated cost was divided into sixty-four shares or "pieces" which were offered for sale at a few hundred dollars each. They were bought by friends and neighbors, by the carpenters, calkers, and riggers in the yard, by skippers with an eye to a rainy day. The vessel was a coöperative affair. Such pieces as were not disposed of otherwise, Israel Fenwick assumed as his own investment and so became the managing owner.

It was far more difficult to promote as a community enterprise the building of a stately five-master to cost a hundred thousand dollars or more, and so it happened that the Fenwick yard was often empty, with no tapering rows of oak frames rising from the keel blocks. More and more Israel Fenwick was dependent on his marine railway which hauled out the smaller schooners and repaired them to go to sea again.

Even this resource diminished when dull times came and the owners of these battered, leaky little craft could not afford to mend them, but somehow kept them going and broke the crews' hearts at the pumps in weather fair and foul. Sooner than abandon the yard, a tragedy more bitter than death to contemplate, Israel Fenwick turned his other property into cash as an emergency fund and stubbornly, unreasonably hoped for better days.

The yard had appeared much the same in his father's time, for no other native industry has been so independent of the complex improvements of invention, of the substitution of the machine for the man. Weather-beaten shops for the carpenters and smiths, gaunt stagings, the rows of blocks sloping to the water's edge, this was the equipment sufficient to fashion a ship stanch to endure the eternal conflict with the sea. It remained the handicraft of elderly, slow-spoken men who worked in wood for the love of it, hand and eye superbly trained. The ground was carpeted with chips and shavings, the smell of the place wholesomely redolent of balsam and tar.

Propped high and dry upon the railway was a three-masted schooner with a white rail and deck-houses. Fresh paint preserved an air of neat respectability, but it was evident that she had seen service long and arduous. No more than a woman can a vessel hide her age by means of artifice. Crouch-

ing beneath the bows, several workmen, with a boy or two to help, were ripping out a spongy section of stem and driving home new planks. The blows of their mallets rang with a cheerful rhythm.

The master of the schooner emerged from the cabin, stiffly clambered down a ladder, and crossed the yard. He was lanky, sun-dried, and bearded, walking with a rheumatic limp. The black coat and sober mien conveyed a flavor of godly piety, but Captain Wesley Amazeen was famed from Eastport to Savannah for a blistering habit of speech. At the pile of timber where Israel Fenwick sunned himself, he halted to say:—

“I dunno as it’s much use to take her out of the river unless there’s a chance to earn her keep. Lumber from Bangor to New York ain’t touched such a ridiculous figger in a dozen years.”

The shipbuilder was awakened from a reverie and he stared a moment before replying:—

“Oh, yes, that reminds me, Wesley,—I wired and got a charter for you. Nothing much. Coal from Perth Amboy to an eastern port, and you’ll have to go down empty. It will pay wages and leave a few dollars for your share. You know how I feel about the Anne Dudley. If I lay the vessel up I’ll feel that the breath of life has gone out of her for good.”

“Named after your wife that’s dead,” gently affirmed the skipper. “You ain’t sayin’ it, Israel,

but you are mighty considerate of an old cuss name Wesley Amazeen, and you don't want to shove him out on the beach. It's the same with Cap'n Sam Pickering in the Ulysses S. Grant, and Elmer Galbraith in the Mary Fenwick. There's only three of 'em old-timers left to sail for you. And you refuse to get out from under."

"They are all the schooners I own in now, to an extent, Wesley. I've been selling out my other interests for what they would fetch. You men are old friends of mine and I naturally want you to make living if there's any way to do it. Trade will pick up again, as sure as guns. God Almighty's wind cheaper than steam and always was."

Israel once more fell to musing, which was odd for him, and Captain Amazeen surveyed him curiously, stowing a fresh chew of tobacco in his waistcoat. For some time they sat side by side in silence, gazing at the venerable Anne Dudley who spars swayed against the sky in delicate outline. At length Israel sighed and no longer rebelled against the strong desire to confide his intimate thoughts. He had never been garrulous or volitional. The blood but his ancestry fructified it. But it seemed as if he and Wesley were again boys together, with a sympathy which he recognized as foretelling the decline of his faculties.

"I don't know it, Wesley," said the old man seriously. "but I am breaking up. It's my heart

something below decks. The doctors seem kind of adrift about it. The pain keeps me awake nights. When we hoisted the foremast into that Nova Scotia schooner last spring, the tackle busted in the shears and I was knocked off the staging, — remember? I did n't mend right somehow."

"Like hell you did n't," indignantly exclaimed Captain Amazeen. "You'll live to see me drowned in the Anne Dudley ten years from now."

"You know those two boys of mine," unheedingly resumed Israel. "Queer, awful queer, that a man should have two sons so totally different. You build two vessels from the same moulds and they'll handle and sail and carry cargo pretty much alike. Here's the oldest boy, my namesake, that I expected to be a right bower, and he is n't worth a hoot any way you look at him. Thirty years old and losing one job after another, clerkin' in a Portland shoe-store now, and married to a shiftless, draggled girl from God knows where."

"He is nothin' for a Fenwick to brag about," cheerfully agreed the mariner; "but look at Dudley, the younger one. Sınarter'n chain-lightning and not afraid to dirty his hands with hard work. When do you expect to fetch him ashore?"

"As soon as I can get word to him," slowly answered Israel. "The U. S. Grant ought to be reported at the Vineyard this week and maybe I can catch him there with a letter. I sent him as mate

in her to learn the trade of seafarin', same as I did and my father before me. You must learn to know vessels, Wesley, before you can build 'em. Dudley is a licensed master by now, but I could n't take the schooner away from Sam Pickering, and anyhow it's time for the boy to come home and take over the yard. My cable is paid out 'most to the last link."

"Dudley Fenwick take over the yard?" was the dubious echo. "I dunno but what I'm surprised, Israel. Are n't you sort of sentencin' him to a losing game?"

Obstinate, impassioned, unconvinced, the builder pounded his knee with his fist and his cheek was crimson as he shouted:—

"Young blood will bring it up again, I tell you! What else have I got to leave the boy except the yard and the three old schooners, and the name of Fenwick? He'll stand by. He promised to, last time he came home."

"Pshaw, I did n't go to rile you," said Captain Amazeen, a trifle puzzled by this vehement outburst. "Dudley will be jammin' this yard plumb full of new vessels, wallopers of schooners to make Spring Haven's eyes bug out."

The skipper awkwardly regained his feet, profanely complained of lumbago, and stood gazing down at Israel Fenwick, who ceased to notice him and was lost in dreams of vanished achievements,

of ships long ago effaced by the sea. He had sent so many of them forth, — brave and sentient they had seemed to him, — and now they moved across his memory like a fleet of misty shadows, as unsubstantial as life itself. Presently Wesley Amazeen limped in the direction of the gate, squinting at the sun to find the time of day, and his lean visage was disconsolate. Something was infernally wrong with Israel or he would n't be croaking like an old woman. He had n't logged seventy years yet and looked as sound as a dollar. A flighty spell, most likely. Gone a leetle mite off at the top.

At the end of the voyage, a fortnight later, young Dudley Fenwick quitted the schooner and went home by rail. His father's letter had been disquieting, an appeal rather rambling and pitiful to spend the winter in Spring Haven. Business coastwise was sure to pick up before long and the yard must be ready to accept orders for new vessels. He was n't quite as strong as usual and the men needed a boss who could jump into overalls and hustle them along.

Dudley smiled at the thought of "hustling" those grave, elderly carpenters who appeared to intolerant youth more like a crew of pensioners.

Entering the low, white house just outside the gate of the yard, he found his father's sister, Miss Mary Fenwick, in the kitchen. Spare and prim and wrinkled, her thin lips virtuously repressed the joy

she felt at this home-coming. She pecked at his brown cheek, nervously fluttered from one room to the other, dropped a teacup on the floor, wrung her hands over it, and exclaimed:—

“Why, Dudley Fenwick, I never saw you look so well and hearty. I’ve been cooking up for you, but, land! there’s no appetite like a sailor’s. Thank you, I’m enjoyin’ poor health as usual, but so as to be about.”

“How is father and where is he, Aunt Mary?”

“In the yard, of course. He sets in the office and looks at the models on the wall, or putters outside. *Putters*, Dudley! A man who always steered straight from one job to the next. And I hear him walkin’ in his room at night. He looks about the same and yet he don’t. I can’t describe it, but Israel is like an old ship that is getting ready to go to pieces all at once.”

Dudley Fenwick nodded and left the house. As he strode into the yard, solid, outwardly imperturbable, it was apparent that his father must have been just such a figure of a man in his youth. There were invisible differences, however, for that gentle mother, Anne Dudley, shy and like a flower, had been all sentiment and tenderness and it tempered the masterful Fenwick strain. She wrote verses for the “Spring Haven Beacon,” pensive little fragments signed with another name for fear Israel might laugh at her. To this younger son she had



MISS MARY FENWICK

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B

left a smile that was warmer than his father's and a mind that more readily betrayed his feelings. In both men was manifest the candid simplicity that is bred of close communion with the sea.

Israel was at his desk, poring over the dog-eared account-books of this schooner and that, balanced for every voyage with dividends or losses duly reckoned. At sight of Dudley in the door he said nothing, but his lip quivered and a trembling hand dropped the pen. Pulling himself together while the son regarded him wonderingly, he lumbered from the chair and huskily exclaimed:—

“I am ever so glad to see you. Did you tell Sam Pickering to sign another mate? I guess you will have to stay home.”

“Aye, sir, if you need me. You deserve a vacation. I can handle things for the winter.”

“It's permanent,” said Israel, with labored emphasis. “I am a sheer hulk, Dudley, surveyed and condemned all of a sudden. There is n't very much business to talk over with you. You know the ropes, and there is no better foreman on the coast than John Moon. He can build anything. I trained him myself.”

“We shall turn out no poor work,” agreed Dudley, reluctant to oppose or argue. “Anything due in for repairs?”

“Only our own vessel, the *Mary Fenwick*. She was in Boston last I heard and Elmer Gallant

writes that he can't risk winter weather in without overhaulin'. He is liable to show up her in a week or so. Sorry you missed the Dudley. Wesley Amazeen is the same cantanke old rooster, only more so, — still likes his Med rum and bitters before breakfast. He speaks of you."

The shipbuilder lapsed into one of those s of brooding detachment which were clouding more and more frequently. His son waited turned to look out at the yard, gray and ah deserted beneath a sodden sky. Three men a pair of horses were moving a pile of ponderous bers and he identified them as material for a Israel was placing the stuff where it would be ha for starting work on the next new vessel. The yo man's eyes filled, and he laid a hand upon his er's shoulder as he said:—

"It is warmer and snugger in the house. posing we go over there and take it easy till dinner."

Israel obeyed, dumbly, walking with a he dragging tread. His massive features were less worn, however, and he rallied after a time to spacy yarn or two with his old gusto. With the val of Dudley the future of the yard had cease fret him. The burden was transferred and he renely accepted the fact that his task was finis Strange, he thought, that he should still seen

all appearances, rugged and unbroken and yet be so near to slipping his moorings. The malady, whatever it was, that tortured him with spasms of pain, mostly during the night, had become increasingly acute.

He lived no more than a month after this, going out peacefully while his sister and son were asleep. It was like a farewell message and a weighty obligation that he should have said to Dudley that very evening:—

“God Almighty’s wind is cheaper than steam, my son, and always was. The Fenwick yard has been building ‘em for eighty years and you must n’t let go.”

The Mary Fenwick schooner had been delayed by stranding in a fog, but she was towed in a day before the funeral, and Captain Elmer Gallant, chubby and bald, half-masted the ensign and tied a bit of crape around his hat. Wesley Amazeen was beating up from Perth Amboy in the Anne Dudley when a gale blew him into Provincetown and he read the tidings in a Boston paper. He straightway hastened home by land to pay his respects to the memory of a friend and employer. The Ulysses S. Grant was loading granite at Rockland, and so Captain Samuel Pickering had not far to journey. All three men were past their prime, hardly enduring discomfort and danger to earn their bread, so buffeted by fortune that they had no other resource.

Israel Fenwick was borne to the burying-ground at Christmas Point and laid beside his father, within sight and sound of the open sea. Like a flagrant intrusion was the presence of the elder son and his shrew of a wife from Portland. In this solemn company of seafarers and artisans they seemed impossibly cheap and alien, displaying a counterfeit grief. At such a time it seemed a profanation that this flabby waster of a man should have been given the name of Israel Fenwick. He was a throw-back to some weaker graft on a sturdy tree. For years he had been a stranger at home, not disowned, but ignored. The loss of a father concerned him not so much as what the father had been unable to take with him, and as soon as was decently permissible he broached the subject to Dudley.

“He left a will, I presume. Know what’s in it, do you? Better put me wise and see if we can’t fix things up without a row.”

“We propose to stand up for our rights,” sharply interjected young Mrs. Fenwick. “Father was very well off, with all this property and goodness knows how many schooners.”

Dudley frowned at them, but held his temper under. His brother had been christened Israel Charles, but with a nice regard for the fitness of things the family name had been dropped in Spring Haven.

“The will leaves everything to me, Charlie,” cour-

teously answered Dudley. "It may seem unfair to you, but —"

"But it's a dirty shame," blurted the other, his sallow cheek showing a trace of color. "I won't stand for it. You can come through or I'll fight it in court and prove unsound mind and undue influence. Oh, yes, I know the cards. I'm a pretty smooth guy."

"He always treated us outrageously," chimed in the loving wife. "We expect to live in this house for one thing. It should belong to the married brother, of course."

"Aunt Mary Fenwick has nowhere else to go and she is as poor as a church mouse," Dudley patiently explained. "I have offered her the use of it."

"You are surely the free-handed, generous gink, are n't you," whined Charlie. "Any chance of a compromise before I begin busting the will? Look at the rotten luck I've had — one thing after another. And I'm Israel Fenwick, the third. Won't that even dent you?"

"Don't bother with him," urged the wife, her chin in air. "The lawyer told us what to do if he turned nasty."

Dudley's face was as hard as the native granite, and the temptation was strong to make them the butt of a grim joke by offering to share his luckless inheritance, but a feeling of compassion restrained him.

Just then his brother suggested:—

“Fifty-fifty is the proper thing, Dudley, old man. There are only two of us to split it. Loosen up and be decent. There’s plenty for both.”

“Well, I’ll tell you the truth,” exclaimed the younger Fenwick, with a laugh. “If I took you up on that, you would hate me worse than you do now. This estate is a minus quantity. It owes more than it can pay. Do you get that through your heads? The yard has been losing money, the vessels can’t earn dividends, and they are too old to sell. The bank holds a mortgage on the property. I am assigning to Aunt Mary Fenwick the few scattered pieces in outside schooners which father held fast to, on the chance that they may give her a small income. You have made a lovely exhibition of yourself, Charlie. I am prouder of you than ever.”

“Trying a bluff, Dudley? I’ll just have to call you. Make out the papers, easing yourself of half the estate, and I’ll sign ‘em like a shot. That will keep the mess out of court.”

“You make me want to throw the harpoon into you and twist it,” was the savage rejoinder. “When you are out of a job and hungry, let me know and I will lend a hand. There is n’t room in this house for you overnight. You have crowded yourself out of it.”

“It was his chance to make friends with us, dearie,” rose the shrill voice of Mrs. Fenwick. “We came to

the funeral in a forgiving spirit, our hearts softened by a great loss. We may be up against it, but we ain't obliged to swallow insults."

"We may as well beat it, Ethel," said her consort, snarling the words from a corner of his slack mouth, "but you can take it from me that I'll get young Dudley yet. Sure, I was ready to be friendly, but can you see me playing the fond brother act any more?"

When they had gone, Aunt Mary Fenwick made no comment, but marched into the sitting-room and vehemently opened the windows to let in the fresh, clean air. This unhappy family affair disposed of, Dudley summoned the sorrowful skippers and round-shouldered John Moon, foreman of the yard, to a conference in the office. Courageously they faced him, but he knew they quaked lest he turn them adrift. He smiled rather unsteadily, for this was an episode in which business could not be kept clear of sentiment, and it was not easy to control his voice as he said:—

"I intend to do my level best to carry out my father's wishes. I can do nothing else without breaking my word to him. And it is not all a matter of duty with me, for I honestly believe there is a fighting chance to win out. The whole coast knows the Fenwick yard and what it stands for. Old vessels are dropping from the list pretty fast. Last winter's gales wiped out more than fifty of them. There is bound to be a scarcity of tonnage some day and some of the new building will come to us. Meanwhile

I'll try to keep the yard in commission with repair work. In his last days my father seemed to see this place as it used to be, but perhaps it was n't all an old man's dreaming. He was ready for the dark voyage over the uncharted sea and his vision may have been clearer than ours."

The group of listeners hung on every word. It profoundly impressed them to perceive that in speech and manner this might have been the Israel Fenwick of their earlier years, talking with them in this same room. The resemblance thrilled them. They felt the intrepid spirit, the fine edge of youth that no obstruction can dull. The foreman spoke for the others, a huge, gnarled hand upraised:—

"We old codgers have n't been exactly blind to the drift of things, Dudley. The business has been scrapin' bottom for a long spell, but you realize what Israel was. Sot till a winch could n't budge him. Now we don't cal'late to ride on *your* back, and that's to be understood at the start."

"Right you are, John," smiled the son of his father. "That's why we are here. You will stay on, of course. Make out a list, if you please, of the men who can best afford to lay off. Let them go as soon as the *Mary Fenwick* is overhauled. Keep the spar-maker, blacksmith, boss rigger, and two or three carpenters for the winter jobs that are sure to come with heavy weather outside. It has been a mild season so far, and few vessels in trouble."

"That sounds real sensible, Dudley," hopefully approved the foreman, "if you are sure you can provide the wages without strainin' yourself."

"I can get away with it, John. I saved a few hundred dollars at sea and you bet it goes into the yard. Now about our own schooners. Fenwick vessels have always been sailed on shares, as you know, — the skipper to pay wages, grub, and half the port charges, and pocket fifty per cent of the gross freight. Can you manage to keep the Anne Dudley going on this basis, Captain Amazeen?"

"I'd ruther not commit myself," grinned Wesley, clutching his beard. "If you'll cast an eye over the vessel's book for the last year, mebbe you'll see why I did n't buy a few automobiles."

"I understand," said Dudley. "I was in the U. S. Grant myself, so you don't have to tell me anything about her, Captain Pickering."

Roly-poly Elmer Gallant, of the Mary Fenwick, mopped his face with a flurried gesture and feelingly ejaculated: —

"If it wa'n't for a passel of relations that have no other visible means of support, I guess I could manage on shares —"

"That's enough," broke in their employer. "Here is the proposition. For the present I waive my share, cut it out entirely. You three captains are to take your schooners and earn what you can for yourselves. There are some small pieces owned here in town, and

if you can pay a little on them, all right, but this won't burden you much. I will undertake necessary repairs, to be made in this yard."

"It sounds hellish generous to me," was the laudatory verdict of Wesley Amazeen; "and if the blankety old hookers don't appreciate a new lease of life, it won't be for lack of drivin' 'em."

"My vessel will be shoved along for all she is worth," chirruped little Elmer Gallant, his round face beaming.

"You won't regret it, Dudley. There's ginger in us yet," came the deep accents of gruff Sam Pickering.

It was in this same room that these and many other masters had foregathered between voyages, tilting back in the wooden armchairs, aiming with notable accuracy at the sawdust box in the middle of the floor, talking interminably of their own trade as if there was nothing to interest them ashore. Dudley Fenwick was moved to shake hands with his stanch companions. It was, in a way, a ceremony, a symbol of his admission to this fraternity of the sea.

With no immediate purpose he left them and wandered into the yard, his heart heavier than his brave words had let them surmise. He stood gazing across the river where the leafless trees huddled among the rocks of a bleak and broken shore. At the lower end of the yard was an old wharf abandoned as unsafe and beside it rested the hull of a dismasted schooner given over to decay. Dudley's idle vision was caught

and held by a brilliant bit of color and he ran to warn the girl in the crimson sweater who had ventured too far out upon the rickety wharf.

"Those planks are as brittle as punk," he said to himself. "I must tell John Moon to put up a fence."

He shouted and the girl turned quickly, retreating to stand poised upon the bulkhead, while the wind whipped her skirts. There was something fine and vigorous in her aspect, a joyous vitality that seemed out of keeping with this place of old men's memories and forgotten achievements. She was a stranger to Dudley Fenwick in whom this first glimpse, vivid, arresting, awakened more than a casual interest. He, too, was young, and fought against loneliness among his father's friends.

"Thank you, Mr. Fenwick, I should have known better," said she, with no trace of confusion, and her glance was as level as his. "I am waiting for my uncle, Captain Elmer Gallant. Is he very busy?"

"I am afraid he is," said Dudley, who knew better. "Won't you come into the house? The air feels like a snow squall."

Rosily she defied the weather, drawing a deep breath as she exclaimed:—

"I love the salty tingle of it. If Captain Gallant does n't come out soon I shall think he has forgotten me."

"May I take him a message?" was the reluctant query.

"Please don't. I refuse to be so selfish. You would n't tell a fib, I'm sure, but I imagine he is busy swapping extraordinary yarns with those two old chums of his. I have seen them together before, you know."

"I really was n't anxious to go and fetch him," confessed the ingenuous Dudley. "The lee of the rigging-loft is more sheltered. Shall we wait for him there?"

She nodded brightly, and he swung her down from the bulkhead, conscious of the warmth of the gloved hand that rested in his for a moment.

"I am Kate Eldredge and I live in Rockland," said she, less informally. "You have never heard of me, of course, for I am merely one of Captain Gallant's poor relations. But I feel quite well acquainted with you. My uncle began talking about you, oh, years and years ago. You used to play aboard the *Mary Fenwick* when you were no taller than the capstan, so he says."

"I stowed away once," laughed Dudley, — "hid in the forepeak and crawled out when the schooner got to sea. Your uncle spanked me and put back into the river. My poor mother was distracted."

She smiled at this, her eyes soft with sympathy so friendly, so sincere, that it comforted him. A childhood in a chill New England household had taught her that to display vain regrets for those who had been fortunate enough to depart this earthly proba-



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tion was unseemly almost, impious. But she was far less a Puritan than a woman and the maternal instinct of pity broke the bonds of inherited reticence.

"I am *so* sorry, Mr. Fenwick. My heart just aches for you," she gently spoke. "There were not many fathers like yours. I wanted very much to come to the burial service, as a token of my respect, but —"

"I wish you had," he interrupted. "It would not have been quite so hard for me to bear. Yes, I loved him and I never seemed to bring him unhappiness. That is a lot of consolation, is n't it?"

She gravely inclined her head. This trick of silent agreement pleased him. It was as if they already understood each other.

"Do you expect to give up the sea and stay in Spring Haven?" she asked.

"I can't afford to loaf in the yard and pretend I am in charge of things, Miss Eldredge. It can run itself for the present. I shall jump at the first chance to sign at good wages. Every dollar I can earn is needed right here. It would n't be sensible to go back with Captain Pickering, because the *Grant* is a small vessel and he can hire a cheaper mate."

"And have you no berth in sight? I was hoping you might be at home this winter. That is very frank of me, for I have just found a position in Spring Haven."

"You don't mean to say so!" he ruefully exclaimed. "Hard luck for me! Does n't that prove

that a sailor's life is a sad one? I am rude enough to ask questions, all personal. Do you mind?"

"It is a most humdrum little story," replied Kate Eldredge, surprised at her readiness to confide in him. "My mother is Captain Elmer Gallant's youngest sister, — younger by twenty years, — and there are four girls of us. The others are still in school, for I am the eldest. Father was lost at sea in a Thurber & Gerrish four-master."

"I remember the gale," said Dudley. "One of our vessels went down."

"He owned an eighth in her, but it was n't insured, and so we went to live with Captain Elmer Gallant. If ever there was a saint on earth, it is that dear little Santa Claus of a man. I tried to finish at the normal school, but it cost too much, so I had to leave without a teacher's certificate. Then I kept house for a dreadfully crotchety old maid in Rockland and studied stenography evenings. A girl feels such a helpless, useless creature at times. Last week I heard of this much better position, — assistant in the Spring Haven public library, — and I was lucky enough to please the august gentlemen of the board of trustees."

Just then Captain Gallant came out of the office, struggling into a shabby overcoat too tight for him. Behind him appeared his cronies who heatedly expostulated while he stoutly affirmed: —

"I promised my niece to go shoppin' with her, I tell ye, and I'm considerable overdue. She said

she'd stay hove to in the yard if I was n't in sight. She aims to buy me a new overcoat with money she's saved by scrimpin' on her own duds. It's a surprise. I heard the girls whisperin' it at home. Of course, I won't stand for no such sinful nonsense."

They dutifully paused to look about for the mislaid niece, but the rigging-loft screened her from view.

"Got mad and deserted you," suggested Sam Pickering, who was none of your glad optimists. "Says she to herself, 'The ungrateful old sculpin. I'll see him froze stiff as a board before I squander one cussed cent on him.'"

Wesley Amazeen inserted himself between them, linked his arms in theirs, and towed them in the direction of the Anne Dudley. "'T won't take more'n ten minutes," he urged. "The kettle is on the gallery stove. You're damnation wrong as usual, Sam. *Bilin'* water and *brown* sugar, a twist o' lemon peel, and three fingers of Old Medford."

They had tacked around the corner of the rigging-loft, and as this dissolute speech rang out in strident accents, Captain Gallant beheld his neglected niece. Wildly he broke from Wesley's grip and trotted over to explain, in the most sheepish manner:—

"You were gettin' on so nice and sociable with Dudley that I did n't feel in no great haste, Kate."

"Look me straight in the eye and say that again,"

she severely commanded. "You had no idea of what had become of me."

"Don't punish him," begged Dudley. "I like the way he takes care of you. I hope he does it again."

"I fell into scandalous bad company," chuckled the chubby mariner, as with a quaint flourish he offered the young lady his arm. "There's no two wickeder old pirates on this coast. They come near draggin' me into the presence of intoxicatin' liquor."

Dudley walked with them as far as the gate while Kate Eldredge took occasion to say to her repentant uncle: —

"With Mr. Fenwick at sea, I shall have to feel responsible for you next time you come to this port."

"Dudley away? Why, he's come home to step into Israel's shoes."

"I did n't mention it to-day, for there was nothing in sight," observed Dudley. "No hope of my getting command of a vessel —"

"Not just now," eagerly cried Captain Gallant, "but if you're willing to go as mate in a big one, mebbe I can help. I was wondering what you'd find to do with yourself in a slack winter like this. They fetched Ward Holcomb home to Rockland with a busted leg t'other day. He takes it calm and philosophical, for he's sick of winter passages in the Elizabeth Wetherell, he tells me, as being unfit for a Christian man to endure, and his mother-in-law has

promised to give him a hen farm. Hens is his besettin' sin, as you might say."

"The Elizabeth Wetherell?" cried Dudley, with kindling interest. "A whale of a six-master! One of the biggest of the coal fleet. Old man Dodge has her — 'Pinch-penny' Dodge, they call him."

"He *is* a thrifty coot," agreed Elmer Gallant. "If I was you, Dudley, I'd be in Portland first thing to-morrow. Lay a course direct for the office. They know who you are. You're rated a chip of the old block. Get to see Amos Runlett himself, the big boss of the Wetherell fleet. He was born and raised in Spring Haven, and endowed this library where Kate has put her name to the articles. A bullyin' hurricane of a man that keeps his skippers scared to death of him, but you ain't that kind. Meet him bows on and he's liable to behave almost human and decent."

Dudley thanked him warmly and turned to say good-bye to Kate Eldredge. They would meet again, of this he felt certain. Already she had made the dead weight of his burden seem easier to carry. He confronted the future with a temper more normally buoyant, with the keen anticipation of the battle against odds that belonged with his years. Her own brave endeavors had inspired a responsiveness quick and mutual. Gratefully he tried to express it.

"You have made it seem as though a fog had lifted from the old shipyard, and the sun is breaking through, Miss Eldredge."

"I am quite sure it is fair weather for you beyond the horizon," she replied simply, as one friend to another.

"Guess I'd better lend you young folks a barometer," amiably suggested Captain Elmer Gallant. "Your conversation sounds like the daily forecast from Washington."

CHAPTER II

DUDLEY FENWICK SAILS COASTWISE

DOWN by Portland water-side, Dudley Fenwick found a dingy brick front among the ship-chandlers' shops. A clerk hopped from a tall desk behind a railing and listened to his errand, suggesting that he wait until Mr. Amos Runlett had looked over the morning's mail. The middle-aged gentleman who sat by a window and methodically laid aside one letter after another in no wise suggested a bullying hurricane of a man. He appeared rather dapper and precise — a trim, slight figure neatly dressed in gray, a carnation in the buttonhole, the moustache a little grizzled and clipped short. He might have been a prosperous dry-goods merchant or any other sedentary, commonplace landsman, but Dudley smiled to himself and recalled stories, still current among sailor-men, of a career that had begun before the mast.

As Captain Runlett he had commanded several schooners and his services were always in demand. He was famous for quick passages, and his crews cursed him bitterly because he worked the very souls out of them. An invincible terrier of a man on the quarter-deck, he was gifted with a business shrewdness uncommon among seafaring folk. Every spare

dollar was kept spinning from one venture to another, in lucky vessels, in Maine timber tracts, in hulks worth breaking up for junk. More than once his owners had helped him with cash or credit in return for advice which enabled them to feather their own nests. When the Wetherell estate launched the first of its splendid fleet of six-masters, he was offered the command. A few years later he stepped ashore to direct one of the most important investments in coastwise shipping.

Becoming aware, at length, of Dudley's presence, he moved briskly to the railing and rapped out: —

“What's your idea in coming to see me? A mate, are you? Captain Dodge hires his own mates.”

The young man colored, but showed no signs of alarm as he answered: —

“You can probably tell me if the berth is still vacant, sir. The *Elizabeth Wetherell* is anchored in the stream and I can't very well get out to her.”

Amos Runlett adjusted his glasses, stared for a moment, and exclaimed: —

“What's the name? Fenner? The fool of a clerk mumbled it. By Judas, you are a *Fenwick* from Spring Haven. The younger one, eh? I saw your brother Charlie on the street yesterday. He is n't worth cutting up for bait. Come inside and sit down. I admired your father. Too bad you lost him.”

At this friendly reception, Dudley explained his

reasons for going to sea, but the spruce dictator of the Wetherell fleet was inattentive. His own thoughts diverted him and he looked up to say:—

“I remember when your dad had to put up a ‘No Trespass’ sign at the gate of the yard. The kids used to swarm in for chips and shavings and they got under foot until Israel lost patience. I had a rotten start in life. You may have heard about it. *My* old man was a lazy, drunken lubber who fell from a roof and cracked his neck, and it pretty near served him right. Israel Fenwick knew the family — we lived in a kind of a shanty at your end of the town. He let me come in with a basket and load all the chips and shavings I could lug off.”

It had left an impression. One could see that. A trifle to recall, inspired perhaps by the vanity of a self-made man, yet it changed Dudley Fenwick’s harsh conception of him. He was human, after all. A flock of little Runletts huddled about a smoky stove in cold weather, with no money for firewood, this was the picture conveyed in the few words. Abruptly he asked:—

“You want to sail with Captain Dodge? Qualified for the job in a six-master, are you? I presume so. If you sailed with Sam Pickering you learned the game. It’s merely a difference in size. I wonder if you can get on with Dodge. Some men can’t.”

“Why not?” frankly demanded Dudley.

“That is none of my business as long as he can

crowd fifteen trips a year from Norfolk out of the Elizabeth Wetherell. She lost money before he took her. He 'phoned me this morning from the wharf that he had n't found a mate. The vessel is discharged and ready to sail. I'll give you a note to him. Better take your duffle aboard with you. Good luck, Mr. Fenwick."

He beckoned a waiting shipmaster inside the railing, and Dudley departed in high spirits. He was twenty-four years old, he loved the sea, and the news would please a girl at home who wore a crimson sweater when in company of her old barnacle of an uncle. Good news lost half its fine flavor without some girl to share it, and Dudley had ignored the sailor's tradition of a sweetheart in every port. The cruel winter passages could not dismay him. Pshaw, it was all in the day's work, and a seaman who preferred a hen farm ought to break a leg.

It was real January weather, a zero temperature, streets deep in snow, and the tow-boats churning and smashing through the harbor ice. At the landing-stage of a wharf, Dudley found a hardy Portuguese with a power dory who consented to put him out to the schooner for double fare. The Elizabeth Wetherell rode high and empty, her side white with frozen spray. The bulk of her looked enormous among the little coasters which had run in for shelter. She would have towered almost as grandly among the famed clippers of an earlier era.

The ornate, intricate beauty of the square rig was lacking, but there was power instead, severe and simple, in the row of masts that soared nakedly a hundred and seventy feet. No crew could have handled their mighty spread of sail without steam to help. Her kind of vessel embodied one of the boldest dreams of modern marine architecture.

As a visitor Dudley Fenwick had been aboard other Wetherell schooners, but never with this elated sense of adventure. To be first mate of her was promotion unexpected, more gratifying than to have gone as skipper in the Anne Dudley or the Mary Fenwick. The dory managed to sheer alongside and he jumped for the ladder. It was like climbing the wall of a house to reach the rail over which he scrambled and stood on a deck three hundred feet long, broken only by the coal hatches and the low deck-houses fore and aft.

Two or three negro sailors moved in a state of shivering misery, the torpor of men whose thin blood had congealed. A saturnine young fellow, obviously the second mate, was trying to reanimate them, not impatiently, but by setting the working pace himself. It was useless to bawl at the poor devils. Like children, they had to be coaxed and encouraged.

Walking aft, Fenwick was about to enter the coach-house door when Captain William Dodge emerged and confronted him. It might have been the figure of a Maine farmer bound to the barn to

feed the stock. He wore a sheepskin jacket, his trousers were stuffed into leather boots, and a fur cap was pulled over his ears. He had the Daniel Webster cast of features, harsh, inflexible, with a kind of sombre dignity, eyes deep-set beneath shaggy brows, mouth grimly drawn down at the corners. The resemblance was noteworthy. His voice accentuated it, sonorous and oratorical with a timbre that should carry the length of a ship. Deliberately as though weighing every word, he rolled out, after reading the note from Amos Runlett:—

“You will come below with me, Mr. Fenwick, and discuss the arrangement. There are certain details to make clear. I avoid misunderstandings with my officers if possible.”

Dudley answered respectfully, a little awed by this imposing personage. As soon, however, as he surveyed the living-quarters his mood brightened. To his simple tastes a liner could have been no more comfortable. The large living-room was panelled in mahogany, with inviting, leather-cushioned chairs. Sliding doors divided it from a cosy dining-room. He had glimpses of a tiled bath and several state-rooms immaculately neat, the berths made up with fresh linen. Steam sizzled in the radiators, and there were electric lights instead of the old-fashioned ship’s lamps. Captain Dodge removed his fur cap, sedately seated himself, and announced:—

“My wife has made her residence aboard the

vessel since last April, Mr. Fenwick. She is a very refined and sensitive woman. You will live aft with us, as is the custom, and she objects to tobacco as dirty and extravagant. You will be forbidden to smoke in your own room or in this cabin."

The young first mate looked unhappy at this, for he loved an innocent pipe when off watch, but there was always the galley or mess-room as a refuge and he made no protest. More serious was the outline suggested of the sensitive Mrs. Dodge. Her portrait was already formidable. The captain paused, unwrapped a woollen muffler from his neck, and continued in reverberant tones:—

"My wife is a very capable housekeeper. She detests disorder. The coal-dust is a trial to her, but the cabin is always clean, as you see for yourself, Mr. Fenwick. You will be careful to leave none of your things lying about. Wet oilskins, for instance. The smell of them is offensive to her. Dry them for'ard, if you please."

Poor Dudley was fairly melancholy by now, but it was not for him to flinch from this new hardship of the sea and he assumed a hearty manner as he replied:—

"Certainly, sir. Anything else? About my duties, and the wages paid a mate in one of these schooners—"

Captain William Dodge appeared displeased, knitting his heavy brows and dropping his voice until it came from his leather boots.

"I was still explaining to you, Mr. Fenwick, my wife's likes and dislikes. One trip will show me what you know about your duties. You must be a competent officer or Mr. Runlett would not recommend you. It is an unusual thing for him to do. The wages will be sixty dollars a month."

"In the Elizabeth Wetherell?" incredulously cried Dudley. "I can't sign for that. I made an inquiry or two ashore. You never had a mate who sailed with you as cheap as sixty dollars."

"You are quite young, Mr. Fenwick, and there are plenty of mates out of work," solemnly insisted the other. "If I am generous enough to offer you sixty-five —"

The stubborn streak made Dudley reckless of consequences. He realized that he was dealing with "Pinch-Penny" Dodge and disgust for the greedy tactics prompted him to fling back: —

"Seventy dollars or you can set me on the wharf, sir. I must have made a mistake and landed aboard a Nova Scotia lumber scow."

The master glowered at this, eyed the note from Amos Runlett which seemed to restrain him, and grumbled: —

"Very well, Mr. Fenwick. You have a high opinion of yourself. Stow your stuff in the starboard room yonder and turn to on deck. A tug will bring Mrs. Dodge off shortly and I shall get under way before dark."

When Dudley introduced himself to the second mate, he found that the preparations for sea had been smartly attended to. The huge hatches were battened with tarpaulins and the iron bars bolted in place. The sail-covers had been removed, and every sheet and halliard was coiled on deck or hung on its pin ready to be led to the steam winches. Black smoke gushed from the stack of the engine-room.

All that could be extracted from the second mate was a yes or no, not in surly fashion, but as the habit of one who preferred silence to speech. Never more than a word or two, a wave of the hand, and the sailors obeyed the order. He gave his name as Peter Strawn, and surmising that Fenwick wondered what race was responsible for his swarthy skin, he explained:—

“My father was a Gay Head Indian. Martha’s Vineyard. You know. He went to sea, too,— married my mother in Brazil.”

Going forward, Dudley discovered that the engineer of this Yankee schooner was a Russian Finn, dreamy and blond, the ten seamen all Africans from Norfolk. It was with amused relief that he invaded the galley and heard the down-east twang of a fat, pale person in a white apron who fried doughnuts and perspired freely. He conversed with the same dripping ease and persistence, talking to himself when shy of an audience.

Fenwick wondered why a man should endure this form of slavery, voluntarily, when a jail sentence would be so much pleasanter. He cooked and washed dishes for fifteen enormously hungry men who were separated according to the stern social caste of the sea, the cabin for the captain and mate, the mess-room for the engineer and second mate, the forecastle for the ten sailors. When not trying to overtake their appetites and the eternal piles of soiled dishes, he tumbled into a cubby-hole of a bunk adjacent to the galley and slept like a dead man until roused out again. The deck seldom saw him unless it was to dump a pan of garbage over the rail. The bracing outdoor life of the seafarer was not for the cook.

He had done nothing else, however, for thirty years, and liked it, foolishly cheerful all the while, his memory a marvellous jumble of schooners and captains and voyages and wrecks. When Fenwick sauntered in he was singing to himself:—

“Some years ago in a ship hereabout,
I was washed overboard in a gale:
And away down below, where the seaweeds grow,
I spied a maid with a tail.
She saved my life, I made her my wife,
And my feet changed in-stant-ly;
So I marri-e-aid this mer-e-e-maid,
At the bottom of the deep blue sea.”

“Come right in,” said the cook without pausing for breath. “Cool outside, ain’t it? ’Fraid to stick

my nose out. Cap'n Henry Mears, of the Jane Hathaway, froze his off in the blizzard of '88, and, honest fact, the doctors rigged him a jury beak, — solid silver it was, and he tried to pawn it in Baltimore one time when he was lit up. New mate, are you? Help yourself to coffee, and I hate to brag about them doughnuts. Mr. Fenwick? Thank you. Sure enough, you favor Israel a whole lot. I was in his vessels off and on before you were born. He always fed 'em well. What say? Alfred is what they call me, Alfred Whittier, hailin' from Machiasport. Never sailed with Cap'n William Dodge? Meanest man that ever skun a flea for its hide and tallow."

It was unseemly for the first mate to provoke any further criticism of his commander, so he drank his coffee without comment, while Alfred, tactfully conscious of maritime etiquette, was particular to address his remarks to the frying-pan.

"The old man owns a nice home, and the woman was as snug as a cat in a basket, but there come a chance to rent the house, so she up and lives aboard. Shucks, they're *rich*, from a poor man's way of thinkin'. Nary chick nor child."

The amiable monologue still babbled on when Dudley returned on deck to see a tug approaching the schooner. It presently made fast abreast of the ladder, which was hauled to one side and the gangway stairs lowered to receive the captain's wife. He was waiting to assist her, warning the tug to keep close.

Fenwick stood by, vastly entertained and pardonably curious. Something told him that he was about to meet the dominant personality of the Elizabeth Wetherell. With a guilty start he knocked the ashes from his pipe and hid it in his pocket.

She was a handsome woman and younger than her husband. This was apparent at a glance. There was a petulant note in her voice, Dudley fancied, as she made some complaint of the cold and hastened to the warmth of the cabin. He became instantly engaged with other things, for Captain Dodge was saying:—

“Heave anchor, Mr. Fenwick, and pass a hawser to the tug. The stores are aboard. All hands will make sail as soon as we pass Portland Light. Then you can set the sea watches.

“Up anchor, sir. The nor’westerly breeze should take us well clear of the land before morning.”

The great steam windlass in the forepeak clanked and thundered, hauling home the ponderous cable link by link. No more tramping around a capstan, a dozen lusty shell-backs bawling choruses to the lead of a melodious chantey-man. They could not have stirred the titanic ground-tackle of the Elizabeth Wetherell from the bottom. It was made to grip and hold her while riding out a storm on the open coast. The first mate leaned far over the bow and put a whistle to his lips to signal the engineer when the dripping flukes lay flat against the hawse-hole.

The tug surged ahead and the short hawser strained

taut. Very slowly the schooner moved with a friendly tide to help the tug which squattered and panted with a great commotion of boiling water astern. This small, frantic creature seemed absurdly disproportionate to its task. As the vessel floated out through the narrow fairway of the harbor, Captain William Dodge stood near the man at the wheel and had almost nothing to say to his officers. Between the upturned collar of the sheepskin jacket and the visor of the fur cap, only his cavernous eyes and a fleshy, wind-reddened nose were visible. He stood ready, observant, while the crew quietly, without flurry, did what needed to be done.

Fenwick spoke, the second mate repeated the order. The negroes took their stations, the steel drums of the winches revolved, and the halliards were passed around them, two or three turns, with a man to handle the slack as it was fed to him. The sails began to climb the masts to the creaking of hoops, the whine of blocks, the subdued clatter of the winch engines. There was no racing to and fro, none of the traditional hurly-burly of a sailing ship getting under way. And yet it was a new version of the immemorial romance of the sea, romantic so long as men spread canvas to the winds of heaven to win a way from port to port.

Foresail to spanker, the six great sails stretched taut and flat, rising a hundred feet from leach to peak, and the jibs went fluttering up the stays. The tug whistled farewell and dropped the hawser. Majes-

tically the *Elizabeth Wetherell* heeled a little as the sheets were trimmed, and filled on her course to the southward. In perfect silence she moved on a darkening sea which a light wind ruffled in glinting flashes of foam. The sky was as clear as a bell, and as the stars came out they sparkled and danced with a hard, frosty brilliance. Captain Dodge broke the stillness to say:—

“Put the topsails on her, Mr. Fenwick. This breeze may hold steady through the night. The course is sou’east by south, a quarter south.”

Like shadows the sailors climbed the shrouds to the lofty cross-trees and cast loose the gaskets. Again the winches took up the burden, and, as large as the mainsail of a small schooner, the cloths were spread from the six topmasts to the gaffs. The vessel felt the drive of them and the water rippled and swirled beneath her counter. At six o’clock Dudley Fenwick went below for supper, leaving Peter Strawn, the second mate, in charge of the deck. Alfred, the cook, had trudged aft with a basket of covered dishes and a coffee-pot, lamenting in an aggrieved murmur:—

“Fired the cabin boy this trip, they did. Said they’d try doin’ without him because it was cheaper. Where do I get off? Walkin’ miles and miles with vittles and I’ll need a pair of skates as soon as the spray flies aboard.”

The captain’s wife received the new mate with gracious condescension. It was to be inferred that

she approved of him as more gentlemanly and refined than his predecessor. Dudley Fenwick demurely appraised her. For one who was no longer youthful, the woman was singularly agreeable to look at, but there was no warmth to her. She chilled him like the air outside. No play of feeling disturbed the firm placidity of her regular features. She seldom permitted herself the thawing influence of a smile.

The captain joined them for supper, more like Daniel Webster than ever when rid of the sheepskin jacket. After saying grace he inquired: —

“Amelia, my dear, what books did you purchase for reading aloud on this voyage?”

“The largest bundle you ever saw for three dollars, William. It seemed a good deal of money to spend, but I went to the same place, the little second-hand shop on Congress Street, and they were piled in a window. Marked at ten and fifteen cents each — most of them solid, improving literature by the best authors. ‘The Foundations of Civilization’ was one title, I remember. I bargained with the man for some time and he finally accepted my offer.”

“They will benefit our minds,” agreed Captain Dodge, although Fenwick fancied he winced a trifle over the three dollars.

“Are you fond of reading, Mr. Fenwick?” interrogated Amelia.

“Novels, mostly, when I can snatch the time,” he confessed, blushing for shame. “Whenever a mate

is off watch you are apt to find him snoring in his bunk."

Conversation lagged. Mrs. Dodge ate primly, her husband with more zest and less elegance. Having cleared his plate he exclaimed:—

"We are chartered for seventy cents a ton from Norfolk to Portland, Mr. Fenwick,—ten cents lower than last trip."

Dudley politely observed that it was a sad state of affairs, but failed to take it to heart. A simple sum in arithmetic convinced him that sympathy was wasted on this thrifty couple. He knew that Captain Dodge sailed for nominal wages of forty dollars a month and primage, or five per cent of the schooner's gross earnings. Five thousand tons of coal at seventy cents, allowing three weeks for a round trip, would net the skipper a hundred and seventy-five dollars besides his wages, or an average income of two hundred and sixty dollars a month. In the hard times prevailing on the coast this was exceptionally fortunate and the living expenses of the Dodges were almost nothing.

Why, then, reflected the inquisitive Fenwick, should there be this eager thirst for economy in handling the ship? Amos Runlett paid all the bills,—wages, stores, repairs,—and the Wetherell fleet had a decent reputation. Dudley grinned and solved the puzzle. The old man owned a piece of the vessel. The dividend at the end of the voyage was always in

his mind. It was the division of the *net* earnings. For his share, perhaps no more than a thirty-second of the Elizabeth Wetherell, a dollar of expense shaved here, another there, might mean a few cents more on the William Dodge account in the dividend statement as prepared in the office.

The meal ended, Amelia cleared the table, swept the floor for crumbs, and attacked the cabin with a dust-cloth, explaining that she could not sleep in such a filthy place. The black powder that sifted through the walls when the coal was going in or out genuinely afflicted her. To the eye of a mere man not a trace of it remained. The door of his room ajar, Fenwick buttoned his heavy reefer and prayed for patience. This woman would be eternally putting things in order, whether they needed it or not. The odd feature of it was that she and the pompous, tight-fisted skipper seemed happy together in a bleak sort of fashion.

On deck, Dudley relieved the second mate and stood the watch from eight o'clock to midnight. The cold was intense. Every hour a benumbed negro replaced another at the wheel. Going forward later in the evening to satisfy himself that the lookout was awake, Fenwick paused at the galley for hot coffee and heard Alfred drowsily humming in his bunk: —

“From Boston harbor we set sail,
And the wind it is blowin’ a devil of a gale.
Now we poor sailors are a-trampin’ on the deck
With the nasty cold rain all a-pourin’ down our neck.”

Unwilling to drag him out, the mate helped himself and returned to his post. The captain's boots clumped against the stairs and his square shape loomed from the companionway. He glanced at the compass, cast an eye aloft, and silently disappeared. Soon after this, Fenwick stepped into the chart-room to fix the bearings of a shore light. Spectacles hooked behind his ears, Captain Dodge was reading aloud the first chapter of "The Foundations of Civilization" while Amelia listened reverently and darned his socks. This glimpse of domestic and intellectual concord disarmed the critical young man's judgments.

Arousing the second mate at eight bells, he gave him the course and said, in a friendly way:—

"A bitter night, Mr. Strawn. It's a mercy the wind is light. Let your men stay in the fo'castle till you need them."

"Takes a red-hot pitchfork to make a Norfolk nigger jump in January," grunted the other. "Like the vessel, sir?"

"Very much, thank you. How long have you been in her?"

"Two years. She's dry now. If it blows when she's loaded, you'll think you're on a half-tide ledge. Deck awash, believe me. Mild winter so far."

Dudley bade him good-night and dived below for his four hours of sleep. Youth and health and the world before him! A golden fortune beyond the reach of Captain Dodge and his Amelia! He could have

sworn that he had no more than closed his eyes when Peter Strawn was shaking him by the shoulder.

“Eight bells, Mr. Fenwick. The wind is shifting to the south’ard. The old man put her on the offshore tack. Call him again if it swings easterly.”

It was the beginning of a slow voyage beset and be-devilled by incessant head winds. Once past Cape Cod, it settled into the southwest as if to bar the road to Norfolk. High and light, the Elizabeth Wetherell worked awkwardly to windward. There was no more talk of making the run in four or five days. It was a strong breeze that raised a sea which pounded and checked her as she thrashed close-hauled and logged no more than three or four knots under topsails, standing in toward the coast and then out to the edge of the Gulf Stream in a course that made a drunken zigzag on the chart.

It was a wind that no longer swept down from the frigid north, and there was this small consolation. The watches on deck were endurable, and the ten niggers noisily revived, like frogs when the ice melts on their pond in spring-time. Pampered children of the sea, they scolded Alfred, clustering at the galley door, because the fresh beef was running short and he refused to serve it to the forecastle more than once a day. Unterrified, he damned them with the vocabulary of a cosmopolitan experience and a retentive memory. It was considered a gorgeous display by the glumly admiring second mate who saw no cause to

interfere. Alfred had been known to use a kettle of boiling water on similar occasions.

In the precisely ordered cabin the atmosphere, while not so rudely discordant as this, was perceptibly inharmonious. As a conjugal duet, Captain William Dodge and Amelia had gone slightly off the key. Not that they quarrelled. She was too refined and sensitive a woman for this, but her nerves were close to the surface and trifles jarred them. "The Foundations of Civilization" lay neglected on the table and the darning basket was untouched in its locker. She was on deck most of the day and well into the evening. The captain was no longer ponderous and almost immovable, holding himself aloof from the routine of the ship. He had become fidgety, quick to find fault, thundering the commands himself when it was time to put the schooner on the other tack.

Amelia hovered over the slowly clicking dial of the taffrail log or stood beside her William while he aimed a sextant at the sun or pencilled the day's run on the chart. She manifested a straining anxiety which was reflected in his own demeanor. Dudley Fenwick soon fathomed the cause and the motive. For one thing, the chief topic at meals was the unusual length of the voyage. To a seaman this was a matter so wholly beyond control in a sailing vessel that all this distress seemed rather childish. They were still being hammered about, between the Delaware Capes and the

northerly cost of Virginia, when the skipper's wife pensively resumed at dinner: —

“Fifty-six miles in twenty-four hours! And it was no better yesterday, Mr. Fenwick. It is absolutely maddening.”

“Is it?” replied the callous young mate. “Supposing we had been blown back a few hundred miles. I was forty days once, making a passage of fewer miles than this one.”

“But you were not with Captain Dodge in the Elizabeth Wetherell,” she loftily rebuked him. “He has never been so long getting south at this time of year.”

“And he is not there yet,” said Dudley, more interested in a juicy apple pie. “It’s the Finn in the engine-room, most likely. There is no worse luck, you know. I shouldn’t be surprised if we banged around here for a month.”

“Why, Mr. Fenwick! You are too intelligent to believe in the vulgar superstitions of the forecastle.”

“True as gospel, every one of them,” he gravely assured her. “The moment I laid eyes on the big Finn for’ard I wished I had signed in some other vessel.”

“Stop that nonsense!” loudly exclaimed Captain William Dodge. “You forget yourself, Mr. Fenwick. My wife does not realize that you are joking.”

“Joke with Mrs. Dodge, sir? I can’t imagine such a thing,” the mate protested, his brown eyes twink-

ling. "I have taken a much more serious view of life since I joined this ship. I shall try to improve my mind hereafter."

The lady looked pleased at this. Her uplifting influence had not been wasted upon this prepossessing young man. Another voyage and he might begin to comprehend the foundations of civilization. The skipper regarded them with earnestness as he said: —

"So much sou'westerly wind at this season is unheard of. Every day the schooner is held back costs money. The margin of profit is small under the most favorable circumstances. At this rate, it will be wiped out."

"Maybe worse than that," Dudley cheerfully suggested. "It looks like an Irish dividend — owners assessed to square a deficit."

The impassive countenance of Amelia for once betrayed emotion as she exclaimed: —

"What could be worse, Mr. Fenwick? And besides that, it means losing a trip, perhaps, and Captain Dodge made fifteen last year."

"I think you are lucky to be chartered at all, Mrs. Dodge. Two Wetherell vessels are laid up in Boston, I understand."

"It depends on who commands them," was the retort.

"Ah, I see. Well, the Lord sends the wind and the Devil brews the fog, as the sailor says. And we have

enough to eat so far. On that long voyage I just mentioned we had nothing but a half-barrel of flour for the last week out. It was a diet of flapjacks, and the cook flapped them until his arm gave out. It sort of hypnotized the men to stand and look at him. Several days of it, and some of them would go out and turn somersaults on deck. Honestly, they could n't help it. The sight of a flapjack gives me a dizzy feeling to this day."

"How very extraordinary," said Amelia, dignified, unsmiling.

Her husband frowned with a disapproval so menacing that the mate finished his pie in haste and fled to the deck. Money was not to be sneezed at, he said to himself, and he was the owner of a bankrupt shipyard, his income the magnificent sum of seventy dollars a month, but he'd be hanged if he would ever fret himself miserable like this sour-faced mariner and his wife. One might think they had lost their last blessed cent. Between them the old bucket of an Elizabeth Wetherell was as merry as a morgue. It was cheering to hear the crew sing out the words familiar on long voyages, "more days, more dollars," but Captain William Dodge took it as a personal affront.

The wickedest head winds are bound to blow themselves out, and there came a day when the sheets were slackened, and with a piping breeze from the northeast the big schooner ran straight for the Cape

Charles Lightship, a tiny blob of red against a sea of shifting green and blue. She foamed through it as if suddenly eager for port. Mindful of the channel buoys, she passed inside the guardian Capes of the Chesapeake and a string of fluttering flags told her name to the signal station ashore. Norfolk soon knew it by telephone, and a tug was sent down, no doubt, but Captain Dodge was determined to sail in as far as he could and thereby cut the towage bill.

In this famous thoroughfare of shipping, coastwise and offshore, every mile of it a story from the sea to Hampton Roads, the *Elizabeth Wetherell* surged past a trailing procession of barges also carrying coal to eastern ports. She met the uncouth cargo steamers, English, French, Norwegian, that filled their bunkers at Norfolk before choosing the divergent courses which led them to ports strange and far distant. A flotilla of destroyers fled by her like so many gray shadows of war and turned to seek a southern drill ground. One grim, lonely citadel of a battleship moved out toward the Capes on business of its own.

At length the tug hovered athwart the schooner's path and reluctantly Captain William Dodge accepted the escort. With a flooding tide they crept as far as the towering coal wharves of Lambert's Point, several miles below the city, where a vacant berth was waiting. Deftly the vessel was nudged into a pocket between two steam colliers and the moor-

ing-lines made fast. The skipper went ashore to report his arrival and get his orders. Within the hour he was back on board, his manner less severe as he said:—

“Things have taken a luckier slant, Mr. Fenwick. They will begin loading her to-night and expect to finish by noon to-morrow. Five of the sailors will want their discharges, and if I can find men to take their places we can be ready to sail late in the afternoon. I shall go up to Norfolk on the tug. If necessary, telephone to the Randolph Hotel.”

“Yes, sir. I am to stay with the schooner and watch them load her?”

“The trimmers will shirk the job if you don’t keep an eye lifted. With forty-eight hundred tons she should draw twenty-six feet for’ard and three inches more aft, if the cargo is properly trimmed, Mr. Fenwick.”

Captain Dodge paused, looked aside, and his heavy features expressed a curious indecision. It was momentary and he spoke sharply, with a needless vehemence.

“The schooner can hold more coal, of course. On this draft she is easier to take through the Vineyard and across the Shoals. She was built to load down to twenty-eight feet. Let them give her five hundred tons more, at any rate.”

“Fifty-three hundred, sir? For a winter passage?” queried Fenwick, betraying surprise.

The comment was wrathfully resented. Captain Dodge was like a mastiff as he growled:—

“The master of a ship decides, young man. His safety is his business, not yours. You have much to learn.”

“I have learned that there is no Plimsoll mark on the Atlantic coast,” was the undaunted reply.

“Any more of that and you will be dismissed at the end of the trip.”

“Fifty-three hundred tons goes, sir. It is none of my funeral,” exclaimed Dudley Fenwick as he walked away to see that the hatches were swung to one side.

The skipper stared after him, shook his head with an air of dogged disfavor, and went below to summon Amelia. Norfolk hotels were expensive, but the grim and uproar at the wharf were too much for her, poor woman, and she was forced to abandon her home while in port.

A few hours later the soft coal began to pour into the cavernous hold of the Elizabeth Wetherell. I roared through several chutes from the lofty trestle work of railroad tracks upon which laden cars from the mines were bodily turned upside down and their contents shot into huge, funnel-shaped bins and so through the chutes. Gravity loaded the vessel with the most astonishing expedition. All night long the locomotives dragged the trains of cars to the long slope where, one by one, a cable gripped and hauled them abreast of the schooner and far above her. The

coal thundered into her without cessation while the gang of negro trimmers, forty of them, half-naked, attacked it with shovels and barrows and escaped burial in it. The decks, the rail, the houses, the sail-covers were covered with the black dirt. It was impossible to believe that the schooner would be sweet and clean again before she should gain the open sea.

Next morning Fenwick began to inspect the marks at the bow and stern as the hull settled lower and lower. No longer high-sided and clumsy, the schooner swam with an altered aspect, graceful, symmetrically proportioned, fit for contest with the sea. And still the sooty torrents of coal plunged into the hold and deeper sank the marks at stern and bow. When empty, the line of her deck had run almost straight, but now it swept in a long curve amidships, a sheer caused by the weight of the cargo which literally sagged the pliant wooden hull.

Dudley Fenwick stood gazing at the schooner from the wharf. Five thousand tons were in her and he felt convinced that this was enough and a little more, but it was not for him to interfere with the final authority of Captain William Dodge. The second mate sauntered off the ship to say:—

“Three hundred more, sir? She’s full to the coamings. They’ll have to ram it into her.”

“That is up to the trimmers,” replied Fenwick. “Have you been in her when she floated as deep as this?”

"A half-tide ledge, I told you," croaked Pete Strawn. "The old man lied. She was never built to draw twenty-eight feet."

"This extra five hundred will leave her mighty little freeboard. It may be well enough in summer but —"

"But his primeage on the extra coal is seventeen dollars and a half," muttered Strawn, with a contemptuous grimace. "What do we care as long as she don't drop from under us?"

CHAPTER III

ALL HANDS ABANDON SHIP!

HOMeward-bound, the *Elizabeth Wetherell* carried a fair wind and smooth water until it appeared as though Captain William Dodge knew his trade far better than his mates whose forebodings had begun to seem ridiculous. The deck was dry and the portly cook made his long excursions to the cabin without peril or discomfort. It resembled a yachting cruise, but all the while the waves washed within a few feet of the bulwarks and the fact might have been significant that the vessel was unresponsive to the lift of the swell. She had the inert stability of a building on land. There was lacking that buoyant sensitiveness of a body immersed in a fluid element which is never quiescent. It was a dead feeling, and in the cabin the woodwork had ceased to creak. The stillness was almost startling.

The mood of Captain Dodge had mellowed amazingly, and Amelia's nerves were normal. A quick run to Portland and the delay would not prove so costly after all. Fenwick was permitted to be frivolous without rebuke, and he was even benignly invited to attend while the skipper read aloud from the bargain lot of edifying literature. The Finn in the engine-room was powerless to conjure evil

weather, it seemed, for the schooner reeled off miles at a ten-knot gait until she turned the co at Five Island Lightship and ran for Vineyard So

Through this narrow passage it often happens that a large sailing vessel would have to anchor tedious days to fetch a wind that should bear to Nantucket Shoals, but Captain Dodge ran on one tide and threaded a course past the hide bars and safely hauled out of the deep-water channels of this vast maze of shoals and shallows with stretches between Nantucket Island and the mainland of Massachusetts. It was audacious navigation for a ship of such deep draft, and Dudley Wick ungrudgingly admired it. Steamers of size preferred the outside route.

From Chatham Lights the schooner was crowded to round Cape Cod, and then it was a straight across the Bay and so to Portland Head, a day's sailing and drop anchor. The weather was bring, overcast, desolately gray, when the Eliza Wetherell passed the end of the Cape and was ported by the observer at the Highland Station. Then she vanished in the curtain of snow which was swirling down on the wings of the northeast gale. Captain Dodge was not caught wholly unaware. The barometer warned him, and even more accurately he foresaw the change by means of an instinctive perception. His experience of the sea had been long and profound.

The mistake he made was in endeavoring to win his haven of Portland ahead of the storm. Delay was intolerable and the thought of it warped his judgment in a crucial hour. Amelia urged and possibly he listened. Beyond doubt he heard the insistent call of the dividend sheet in the office, besides which the long trip to the southward had sapped his patience.

Handling the big schooners in this coastwise trade is a school of seamanship peculiar to itself. In the most important respects it defies the traditions of the deep-water mariner.

For one thing, it is almost impossible to reef or shorten canvas after a heavy gale begins to blow. The canvas is not divided into small areas which can be taken in separately as with the square-rigger. The tremendous sails become unmanageable. The crew is powerless and must let them stand or be ripped to fragments. It is a vital matter to strip the ship in readiness before the weather assails her.

Again, she does not stand off to fight away from the lee shore, as is the orthodox procedure, but boldly runs in toward the coast and anchors to ride it out. The men who sail her dread being blown offshore far more than the risk of stranding.

All of which was known to the wise old master of the *Elizabeth Wetherell*, but he was wrong for once and held on too long. The wind steadily increased in violence, but he let the schooner smash into the

rising seas which tumbled over her rail and rushed across the deck in pounding cataracts. She was only a few hours from home and he would not heave her to and lower sails. Immovable in his sheepskin jacket, he planted himself near the wheel.

It was not long before the overburdened hull buried itself in water that froze in fantastic masses, upon the winch-houses, the hatches, the rigging.

Dudley Fenwick and the men of his watch strove to keep the running-gear clear of ice against the time of need. The negroes toiled to save their own skins. The fear of death was a stimulus more powerful than kicks or curses. The afternoon was very brief. The daylight faded into a dusk ghostly with flurries of snow and then into a night, not of darkness, but of an ashen obscurity. There was to be no sight of Portland Head.

When Captain William Dodge was compelled to realize this, he dared not grope for an anchorage elsewhere. The shore lights were invisible, his position by no means certain. He was caught in the open sea, in the worst storm of the winter, and there was nothing to do but run before it. He was confronted by the one mischance which he had dreaded during the years of his career in a great six-master.

The fate of the Leander Wetherell was still a topic for argument and conjecture in the back rooms of ship-chandlers' shops and pilots' offices. A sister ship to the Elizabeth, she had been obliterated in

such a stress of weather as this, gone without a trace, foundered with all her people. Curt, unfeeling, heavy-fisted had been the verdict of Captain Dodge.

"A genial man, Ed Hanson, that was in her, but hot-headed and apt to carry on too long. It was haste with him and a race against time. He blundered, and it cost him his life and his ship. Any fool can crack on sail."

And now this confident critic of other men's errors was the fool and he knew it. Given the fair chance, with a reserve of buoyancy, his powerful schooner could live through this or any other gale that blew on the eastern coast. But she was handicapped, crippled, like a man manacled. The dead weight of the coal in her menaced the voyage with the supreme disaster, which is "missing with all hands."

It was a tragic admission of defeat when Captain Dodge trumpeted the order to the mate to ease off the sheets and put her before the wind. They had managed to lower and stow the spanker, the largest of the sails, before the might of the wind prevented, but on the five other masts the lofty sails still stood as hard as iron. Away from Portland Head and out into the Atlantic the schooner went careering, half-submerged, while the ice piled higher on her deck and clothed her in gleaming armor.

The men could do no more. To hammer the

sheet-blocks clear of ice while the water washed over their heads had been the last effort of which they were capable. They clawed their way into the forecastle and closed the hatch. They were cut off from the rest of the ship, from the officers aft. Their refuge was an island, the cabin another, and the sea rolled between. The cadenced jar and throb of the steam pump could be felt. It was some slight comfort. The seams were working open, but the Finn was lifting the water out of her.

It blew harder with every hour. The fate of the Elizabeth Wetherell was removed from the keeping of her crew. They were merely spectators. The mizzen sail split at midnight and the jigger was torn to fragments soon after. The schooner plunged and rolled, for the ocean was enormously upheaved, but her motion was sodden and weary, as though she had lost heart and no longer cared to remain afloat.

Some time before dawn the pump was stilled. Dudley Fenwick was about to attempt the desperate journey to the engine-room far forward, but the skipper detained him. The Finn had done his best. It was foolish for the mate to throw his life away. Daylight would be soon enough to investigate the damage to the ship.

The mate obeyed and went to his room for dry clothing. The cabin was singularly undisturbed by the hideous turmoil outside. It was like a glimpse of another world inexpressibly remote. The electric

lights had gone out when the pump stopped, indicating that the engine-room was flooded, but the captain's wife had lighted the lamps which cast a softer, homelier radiance. The book-rack was upon the table, the darning-basket in one of the leather chairs. The stateroom doorways disclosed the wide berths made up with spotless white counterpanes.

The woman of this luckless company was in the small pantry adjoining the dining-room. With one hand she steadied herself while the other held a coffee-pot over the flame of an alcohol stove lashed upon a locker shelf. She wore a woollen wrapper open at the throat, and her hair, dark, with a few strands of gray, hung in one thick braid. Her aspect was almost girlish, but not incongruously so, for she seemed more feminine, more appealing, than Fenwick had hitherto found her. For a woman past forty the years had been kind.

Her fine color had paled during the night and there were shadows beneath her eyes, but there was no yielding to fear of the morrow. She was steadfast and, as a young man, Fenwick respected courage beyond the other virtues. There was a new comradeship in her smile as she said:—

“The coffee is ready, lots of it, and we have canned meat and hard bread. It is kept aft for such an emergency as this. The poor cook might as well be in Portland.”

“Alfred is unavoidably detained, Mrs. Dodge.

We came near losing him on that last trip with a basket of supper. It's a nasty wind and sea. That coffee of yours is worth a month's wages."

He carried the food into the cabin and made her comfortable with pillows and blankets upon the divan. Propped against the wall, he gulped down another cup, black and scalding, while she exclaimed: —

"We are in no great danger or Captain Dodge would tell me so. It has always been his one fear, that the schooner might run away with him, but he never makes a mistake of seamanship."

"There is no more capable master on the coast," replied Dudley. He felt that she understood how slender was the hope of survival, but loyalty constrained her. She was revealing herself as admirable.

"I am *so* glad that my husband and I are together," she said, very wistfully. "It would be so much worse if I were ashore to-night — away from him. You are unmarried, Mr. Fenwick. This gale must seem terrible, even on land. Is n't some one lying awake and thinking of you, wondering where you are?"

"Aunt Mary Fenwick is probably sitting up in bed, listening to the windows rattle and the shingles blow off. I can hear her saying, 'That boy was a fool to go to sea, bless his heart.' She wears a ruffled night-cap, ties it under her chin."

Amelia Dodge laughed aloud, but she was not to be so easily parried.

"A girl, I mean. There must be one in Spring Haven."

"Oh, I see. Yes, I plead guilty. She came to live there recently. I wish I had a photograph. For a short acquaintance, I never met any one so easy to remember. Miss Eldredge is her name, — Kate Eldredge, — a niece of Captain Elinor Gallant."

"Why, I knew her years ago, Mr. Fenwick. Her father's schooner lay beside ours and all the tots were aboard for the summer. And do you really love her?"

"I am liable to, if this old coal-box holds together, — pshaw, that is n't what I intended to say. Well, I have had my turn below and I'm good for another stretch on deck. I must let the captain and Peter Strawn have a whack at the coffee-pot."

He staggered with weariness, every muscle stiff and sore, as he crossed the reeling floor, caught hold of the hand-rail, and was about to pull himself up the companionway. The bulky figure of Captain Dodge came tumbling down the stairs, colliding with the mate. The fur cap was gone and blood was frozen to a cut on the forehead.

"Slipped and banged my head against a block. It made me dizzy," he muttered thickly, on hands and knees. "Those two niggers at the wheel, Mr. Fenwick, — they are fairly brittle with cold. We can't get men from for'ard. You and Mr. Strawn steer the ship."

Fenwick helped him to his feet, but Amelia was the swifter. With a piteous little cry she tried to raise him by main strength. As he slumped into a chair she was kissing his cheek, murmuring endearments, running to fetch water and bandages. The mate glanced at them as he toiled up the stairs. "Pinch-penny" Dodge and his penurious wife! Unselfishly they loved each other, and perhaps this was the shining mantle to cover their petty sins. The scene dwelt in Fenwick's thoughts when again he faced the implacable storm. An extraordinary interlude!

Soon Captain Dodge returned to duty and grasped the wheel, roughly ordering the second mate below for a brief respite. If he wished to smoke his pipe in the cabin, Mrs. Dodge had no objection. A wonderful woman, he bellowed in Fenwick's ear to make himself heard above the infernal racket. Her first really bad experience at sea, too. He should have compelled her to stay in the comfortable home ashore. This began to look like the finish of the Elizabeth Wetherell.

The speech was unusually confidential. It was the last word spoken between them until the cabin clock rang out four bells, six o'clock in the morning, and the eastern sky was still untouched by the merciful light of day. Methodically Fenwick jerked the clapper of the bell in front of the binnacle and shouted to the skipper:—

"I can see my way about before long, sir, and it's not washing over her as high as it was. If I can set the crew at work with axes, perhaps we may get rid of the ice in the bows. The weight of it is shoving her under."

"Wait. No use to try now. You will lose your men. If the steam pump had kept going —"

Captain Dodge sighed deeply and left the sentence unfinished. Slowly the morning unshrouded itself, melancholy, without a sunrise. It enabled the eye to discern the ragged remnants of sails whipping around the masts, a broken gaff hanging like the wing of a wounded bird, a litter of ropes on deck, a winch-engine all ice with its protecting house smashed to bits. The vessel was unspeakably dishevelled and forlorn, robbed of that towering simplicity of outline which had made her austere and beautiful.

This damage was not fatal, however, for it would be no great task to bend enough new sails to carry her toward the nearest port, but the fetters of ice bound her and the temperature was still low. Even more ominous it was to watch the water froth across a deck which was almost level with the sea. Dudley Fenwick comprehended that this stately six-master which had appeared to him unconquerable had no more than one chance in a hundred of living through another day.

Men of his breed were not accustomed to surrender without making a stand in the last ditch. Sliding



down from the poop, he made a dash for the next mast forward, missed it, shot into the lee scuppers with a lurch of the ship and was swept back by the next comber that toppled aboard. An arm outflung wrapped itself around a boom-tackle to which he anchored himself until he could attempt another stage of the journey. This time his feet flew out from under him, he spun on the ice like a top, caromed off a hatch coaming, and clutched a belaying-pin rack. Sputtering and gasping, he regained his breath and somehow progressed by the distance of another mast.

His goal was the galley as a way station *en route* to the forecastle beyond it. A few more acrobatic feats and he discovered, to his intense dismay, that to reach the galley was easier than entering it, for doors and hatch were sealed with ice. Precariously balanced, he yelled at the top of his voice and a round window was wrenched open from the inside. An axe-handle was poked through and the mate chopped for his life. Presently some sort of a battering-ram was wielded from below to aid him and the doors banged open just as he was sliding wildly to windward. He dived for refuge and might have broken his neck, but the portly presence of Alfred intervened as a cushion.

“Delighted to see you, Mr. Fenwick,” said this excellent sea-cook whose composure was unruffled. “Frosty mornin’, ain’t it? Sorry the weather shet

you off from your regular vittles. Gosh, peek into the mess-room. Jammed full of niggers sayin' their prayers. They piled in here from the fo'castle while the goin' was good. It's awful wet, — water drainin' and swoshin' in everywheres, and I have a sort of a hunch that the blamed old snoozer of a vessel is headin' for the bottom. Reminds me of the time we was picked off the Howard B. James, bound to Martinique with sugar staves. She come darn near founderin' while I was in my bunk, for nobody thought to wake me up and they was scramblin' hell-bent into the yawl, every man for himself —”

Dudley grinned and cut him short by demanding: —

“Where is the big Finn? What went wrong with him?”

“Pump busted somethin' and he's awful sore. Says he asked the old man for spare parts in Portland, but did n't get 'em.”

Fenwick passed into the engine-room through an alleyway. The sad-eyed Finn was stoking his firebox which spluttered as the water spilled into it from the floor. The needle of the gauge flickered to a pressure barely perceptible.

“Up against it, are you, chief?” said the mate.

“Yass, sir. The jig iss up, too. Wid fair wedder I can do some kind of beesness wid a pump, but not now.”

“We have seen the stiffest part of the gale,” was

the cheery response. "Make all the steam you can and we'll try to get one winch working."

Invading the crowded mess-room, he selected two of the sturdiest sailors and invited them to return aft with him. They displayed so little enthusiasm that he plucked them forth by the scruff of the neck, pitched them on deck, and told them to slide or swim for it. They implored their Maker and made a frantic race of it, upsetting each other, cheating death a dozen times, while their comrades roared applause from the galley door. Fenwick finished a close third and told them to take the wheel.

Captain Dodge limped to the taffrail and gazed, sadly silent, at the helpless wreck of his schooner. So slender was her margin of buoyancy, with the water that had leaked into the coal and the hundreds of tons of ice above decks, that with every sullen lurch it seemed as though she must drop from under her people. And still she floated, blown farther and farther off to the southward, away from the track of coastwise shipping and the immediate hope of rescue.

Toward noon the fury of the sea abated, not much, but so that life-lines could be rigged and the men bullied into a pretence of labor. They thought it useless. Their primitive souls were obsessed by a dumb fatalism. Norfolk and its yellow girls had seen the last of them. Captain Dodge stolidly watched them, his hands clasped behind him, his head sunk forward, the deeply lined face inscrutably composed.

The sky held no tokens of fair weather. After a while he spoke harshly to the first mate.

“You had better overhaul the launch, Mr. Fenwick. Get the cover off and see how much ice there is inside. Ask the chief to look at the engine and sound the gasoline tank. Salt water has spoiled most of the cook’s stores, I suppose, but do the best you can. There must be considerable stuff in the cabin pantry.”

“Prepare to abandon ship, sir? What about the yawl? Sixteen of us crowded into the launch, one of them your wife, — and a heavy sea running, — if you don’t mind my suggesting it. Some of us will be glad to go in the yawl.”

“Was n’t it smashed last night? I took that for granted.”

“It is stowed on the lee side of the house and the lashings held. The ice formed so fast that it protected the planking, and the boat is seaworthy, I’m sure, sir.”

“Clear it away, then, Mr. Fenwick. It is gentlemanly of you to be thinking of my wife. She will appreciate it. She has a favorable opinion of you already. A hasty, uncomfortable business if we try to get away in the night. I expect to leave the vessel this afternoon.”

The news carried swiftly, and the men swarmed aft to huddle near the launch until the mates drove them away. A sinking ship was no excuse for forget-

ting discipline and decency. There was no need, however, of admonishing the cook or reminding him of his duties. His talents shone with a remarkable lustre. One might have assumed that forsaking a drowning schooner was his favorite occupation. A plaid ulster, gaudy muffler, and a derby hat jammed down to his ears gave him a certain festive, shore-going air. Fat and flabby and short-winded though he was, his activity set the pace for the crew.

"I hove a barrel of biscuit into an upper bunk and kept it dry," he babbled in the store-room. "You never can tell. I'm writin' out a list of what goes into the boats, Mr. Fenwick, and please be careful to check it up, won't you? Mistakes can be dreadful awkward. We was waterlogged in the Abbie L. Dix one time and the old man made me leave stockin' the boat to him. When we come to investigate, all we had was a keg o' vinegar pickles and a case of canned lobster. It soured us till we darn near bit each other, and I contracted chronic dyspepsy."

Blithely, loquaciously, Alfred trundled himself into the cabin to complete his inventory. Mrs. Amelia Dodge had been weeping, and the traces of tears wrung the soft heart of this elderly man. The situation seemed to justify a friendly informality, and he suggested, his head in a pantry locker: —

"There's good vessels lost every day, ma'am. The summer-time is nicer for it, of course. Plenty of warm flannel underclothes is important. I advise you to

put on all you 've got. And don't forget your goloshes. Pity you don't smoke a pipe. It helps."

"Is there anything I can do, Alfred?" she asked, her fortitude almost gone.

"Not a thing, ma'am, except to pack your little handbag and be ready to stand by. You are a lady and you 'll be treated as such."

Presently Captain Dodge came below to wrap his chronometer, sextant, and a roll of charts in a rubber coat. From the wall of his room he added a small framed photograph of Amelia in her wedding-gown.

"There is a lull and the wind may shift into the nor'west," said he. "It is time for us to go."

The launch swung from the davits astern, ready to be lowered. Amidships the yawl had been shoved close to a splintered gap in the bulwark. Fenwick had divided the party into two groups. They waited obediently for the word, in a mood of hushed expectancy. The engineer and second mate were to go in the launch and with them the six sailors who seemed to be the most dependable of the crew. When the captain returned, Fenwick explained: —

"The cook and I will take the yawl, sir, with four men. We prefer it that way. You will head for the coast under power, I presume, so we can't keep you company. If you will give me your probable course—"

"I shall take you in tow, Mr. Fenwick."

"No, sir. We refuse to permit it. You will never

get anywhere, and the men agree with me. Your wife must n't be knocked about out here, any longer than can be helped."

This was a chivalrous mutiny which Alfred volubly reënforced. The skipper made no more protest. He was like one who walked in an evil dream, his manner pitifully absent-minded. With no disorder the final scenes were enacted. The men seated themselves in the launch which still hung suspended from the falls. Amelia Dodge shook hands with Fenwick and tried to speak, but her husband caught her by the waist and tossed her into the arms of the second mate. The Finn crouched over the motor which he had set running. Captain Dodge hesitated, turned to Fenwick, and shouted:—

"Yawl ready? Then put her overside and jump in. I intend to be the last man to quit my vessel."

It was the only dramatic touch. Otherwise the episode was quiet, almost commonplace. With a shrug Fenwick called his party, and a few minutes later the yawl went spinning away on the back of a gray comber. It was touch-and-go, dextrous seamanship to avoid being crushed against the schooner's side. Then the launch was dropped, swayed, rose to the lift of a following sea, and the falls were unhooked. The whirling propeller gripped the water, with four oars to help it, and the stout little craft lunged away to leeward, flinging the spray from her bow. The *Elizabeth Wetherell* had been abandoned at sea.



CHAPTER IV

SAIL HO!

THE yawl had been four days adrift. The sea was still boisterous, the wind offshore. Fenwick had hoisted a spritsail only to take it in. There was no beating in the direction of the coast, for to prevent the small boat from being overwhelmed required the most heart-breaking exertion and a sleepless vigilance. Much of the time she rode to a sea-anchor fashioned of oars and a spar while the castaways bailed in turn. The air was milder, and the spray no longer froze as it fell. A landsman might have found such a plight unendurable and perished of it, but these were seamen whose trade had compelled them to suffer cold and wet. Exposure was habitual. Even the negroes were seasoned, in a way.

The exception was the cook who had lived his life indoors. Fortunately, there was a heroic spirit within that ample, rotund body which warmed it like a red-hot stove. When not otherwise engaged, he slumbered upon a thwart, catching up with short allowances of sleep in the galleys of innumerable schooners. The derby hat was mysteriously, solidly glued to his cranium. A hurricane could not have budged it. When, for two hours at a stretch, he bailed the yawl, the swing and scoop of the bucket were timed to the

everlasting refrain of that song about the mermaid. There were as many verses as links in a hundred-fathom cable, it seemed to the others, who learned them all by heart. The Norfolk niggers would have woven the chorus into mellow close-harmony if it had been with their dying breath. And so the yawl was musical, which was better than cursing and laments. There was food enough, a water-cask, and now and then the sun came out to dry them. It was odd to hear them, lips cracked and bleeding, hands all raw, faces gray with salt, legs knotted with cramp, death lapping the gunwale, while they melodiously proclaimed to an empty ocean that:—

“Up came our mate as bold as brass,—
‘What, ho, merman!’ says he;
‘If the truth should be told,
It’s to see your captain bold,
I’ve a favor for to ask of he!’
The captain comes to the good ship’s side
And he looks way down in the sea;
Says he, ‘My little man, just tell me if you can
What’s the favor that you want of me.’”

“Blow ye winds — high — low,
Blow ye winds — high — low;
Clear away with the morning dew,
And blow ye winds — high — low.”

It is easy to fancy what these black foremast hands did with a long-drawn, liquid refrain like this, and how it diverted them from the misery of their condition. They were tractable, afraid of the first mate, grateful for the food so scrupulously doled out by the

cook. Two of them were brothers, Archie and Sidney Holt, enough alike to be twins, who had sailed for years in the Elizabeth Wetherell, missing every other voyage in order to strut ashore and spend their wages. In the yawl they stayed together, displaying a solicitude mutual and affectionate. Often, when clinging to the steering-oar during a night watch, Fenwick heard a soft voice drawl: —

“Where is yo’, Archie boy? I reckoned yo’ had done flew overboa’d.”

“Here I is, Sid, humped up in th’ bow. Is you all right, buddy?”

Whenever the sun shot through the watery banks of clouds they chatted and chuckled together with an unctuous, unflagging zest, and Fenwick was surprised to note how shrewdly they analyzed the disastrous sequence of events. One of the favorite themes was the character and deeds of Captain William Dodge.

“What he done tell the mate?” Archie would begin, imitating the solemn dignity of the hapless shipper. “‘*Mo’ coal, Mistah Fenwick, mo’ coal.* Don’t have no mercy on th’ pore ol’ Elizabeth. Every lump o’ coal is a penny in mah pocket, Mistah Fenwick, an’ Gawd knows I needs th’ money.’”

“What good his money ever done him, buddy? Rarin’ and tearin’ across th’ Bay to git to Portland an’ discharge. Dollahs clinkin’ inside his haid. I’se ‘bliged to believe ol’ Satan made ‘em clink.”

“It’s a warnin’, Archie boy. I ain’t done ‘speri-

enced religion in fo'teen months an' it's sort of wore off."

"I suttinly wish we was all good Christian men in this yere boat. Mebbe a steamer 'ud sight us an' take us somewherese."

"Huh, where you s'pose the launch run to by now? Cap'n Dodge grumblin' to th' ingineer, '*Gasoline mighty expensive, chief.* The ol' schooner ain't earnin' me nothin' now. We bound to save our lives, but don't be no mo' 'stravagant 'n you kin help.'"

"That ain't right, Archie. He thinks a powerful lot of his wife. He'd ha' stuck by his vessel longer if it had n't been for her, you hear me."

It was, indeed, strange that the yawl should be so long undiscovered, but her aimless course lay between two lanes of travel and the horizon was seldom clear of misty vapor. On the fifth day the water was strewn with the yellow, fronded Gulf weed, and Fenwick concluded that they must have drifted near the edge of the Stream.

"No use of getting into it," he said to the cook. "The current would set us nor'east at a couple of knots an hour and still farther out to sea. She ought to stand the sail by now. Step the mast and we'll try a course sou'west by south until it breezes up too strong."

Squally puffs interfered, and while the men waited for the word, the mate glanced to the northward and his keen eyes discerned the thread-like masts of a

vessel just climbing above the ocean rim. It was impossible to know with certainty whether she was under sail or steam. In this same manner other ships had been seen in tormenting glimpses, passing too far distant to observe the tossing speck of a yawl and its entreating signals. Alfred hooked his steel-rimmed spectacles behind his ears and squinted long and eagerly. Archie and Sidney had a great deal to say, their opinions being of no consequence whatever. A chunky, bow-legged mulatto, whose face was grotesquely swollen with frost-bites, began to cry like a baby.

The ship which so wistfully drew their attention seemed to come no nearer. It was illusive, like a phantom. And yet it did not vanish. They disputed angrily, finally agreeing that three masts were visible, but no smoke from a funnel. It was probably a small schooner. The mate excitedly calculated the distance at which such a vessel could be seen from a small boat and announced that they could be no more than five or six miles apart.

"She is standing across the Stream, I should say," he added, "but which way does she head?"

"For Gawd's sake, Mistah Fenwick," quavered one of the men, "let's us try an' cross her track. Mebbe she gwine tack an' fetch a long laig to west-ard."

"We can't work up to her under sail. The wind is wrong for us. It may be another wild-goose chase.

Get out your oars, then. It makes little difference which way we wander."

Here was something to spur their jaded hopes, a goal to be fought for with frenzied exertion. Fenwick thrust the cook into the stern-sheets and swung up on the stroke oar to set the pace. They shouted as they bent their backs to it, teeth bared, eyeballs starting, heads jerked back as if they would snap them off. The blades ripped into the water and splashed out again while the cook bawled himself red in the face with a "Hea-a-v-e, my bully boys," and snatches from that pulsing chantey, "Fare ye well, Spanish ladies." The yawl climbed the hills of green water and went slithering down the hollows.

Alas, they were men worse broken by exposure than was realized. The strength had been battered out of them, their vitality had ebbed. They rowed a half-hour at this tremendous clip and exhaustion betrayed itself in labored breathing, features contorted and streaming with sweat. Their cracked hands stained the oars with blood. The first to grunt his distress was the bow-legged, coffee-colored seaman. There were patches of gray in his wool and a web of fine wrinkles at the corners of his eyes.

""T won't do this nigger no good to be saved by no vessel," he gasped. "I'll be a co'pse an' no mistake."

Fenwick ceased rowing for the moment, and they twisted about on the thwarts to stare at the three tiny topmasts of the schooner. The distance had sen-

sibly diminished. This was a magical stimulus, the nearest they had come to escape from their wretched predicament. The oars dipped again, but not so madly. Obstinateiy the men swayed to and fro, beseeching the cook to tell them when the schooner looked any closer. He lied to encourage them, swearing that he could almost recognize the vessel. The truth was sufficiently splendid. They were steadily gaining.

Another hour, with occasional pauses for rest, and Fenwick confessed himself puzzled, after an absorbed scrutiny.

"She is still hull down," said he, "but we have raised her as high as the cross-trees and I'm a sinner if that is any three-master. Two or three of her top-masts are gone, and the only canvas I can make out is a sail a little for'ard of 'midships. No wonder she has n't run away from us."

"Same gale o' wind that foundered the Elizabeth Wetherell must have played hob with her," suggested Alfred.

"There is no hurry now, boys," Fenwick advised them. "That crippled coaster can't lose us. We'll be snug aboard for dinner and a chance to stretch ourselves."

"Mistah Fenwick sho'ly kin 'spress hisself in welcome words, uh, buddy?" chuckled Sidney.

"Stretch? Man, I ain't never gwine to git th' kinks out of mah system nohow."

The oars wavered uncertainly, but continued to move the yawl toward her destination. Alfred polished his spectacles with an end of the muffler and earnestly conversed with himself. The fitful weather relented and there was less wind to oppose them. Inch by inch, it seemed, the schooner was lifting above the hazy line where sky and ocean met. The thin, black line was the upper part of her hull. It slowly broadened and became defined.

The cook was more than intent. He scrambled to his feet, precariously poised and clutching the long steering-oar. His mouth hung open as if he had forgotten how to close it, he shaded his eyes with a tremulous hand. Then his legs gave way and he collapsed with a thump, trying to speak and uttering nothing but queer sounds. Fenwick pulled in his oar and concluded that hardship had been too much for poor Alfred, who suddenly came to life, plucked off the precious derby hat, smashed it upon the gunwale in a vast, ecstatic gesture and managed to ejaculate:—

“Never saner in my life! There’s nothin’ too unexpected to happen at sea. Darn my fool soul — *just look at her!!*”

They obeyed and sat like wooden men, spellbound by an overpowering emotion. Vessels may resemble one another so closely as to appear identical to the novice, but to those who know them, who have intimately lived with them, their personalities are as distinctly dissimilar as those of so many human beings.

in the street. Dudley Fenwick was the first man to speak.

“But she went to the bottom, I tell you. When we left her she could n’t live the night out.”

The others were instantly vocal, in a jumbled outcry of oaths and hysterical laughter. With their fists they pounded each other. Archie rolled in the bottom of the boat and flourished his feet.

“Th’ pore ol’ Elizabeth,” he roared. “‘*Mo’ coal, Mistah Fenwick, mo’ coal!* She’s still a-floatin’, so give her a little mo’ coal.’”

Alfred’s agitation took a reminiscent turn, as was inevitable, and he began to expound:—

“Dunno as I ever seen but one sight more flabbergastin’, and that was when the Judith Bangs turned turtle off Matanzas in July, or mebbe it was August, — year of —”

“Oh, shut up, and steer this boat, you old fat-head!” cried the mate, rude for once. “Give way, men, and we’ll investigate this giddy miracle of a derelict.”

They pulled in leisurely, haphazard fashion. It had ceased to be a race for life and appealed to them in the light of a colossal joke, that they should have abandoned a vessel which, for five days, had refused to go to Davy Jones. Having eughred destiny, she was drifting faithfully in quest of those who had deserted her. Fenwick conjectured that she must have skirted the Gulf Stream during the greater

part of this masterless journey, avoiding the strongest set of the northerly current, with sail enough on her to make headway before the prevailing winds. Her existence was a riddle which he was striving to solve when beyond this storm-beaten six-master he spied the smoke of a steamer. His interest shifted and the situation was again thrilled with the tense uncertainty of a contest as he rapidly explained:—

“Steamer coming up fast, in a line with us and our vessel. She will pass close aboard. If she beats us to it, good-bye salvage, boys. Dead, are you? Then you’ll have to show me a lively lot of dead ones. Lay into it before the steamer puts a line aboard our schooner.”

They wasted no breath in questions, but proceeded to prove that there was a last kick in them, the unguessed reserve of strength and will which is never quite exhausted. They comprehended that the salvage issue was, for common sailor-men, dazzling and stupendous. And no lucky brute of a steamer should wrest it from their grasp. Back and forth they rocked and wheezed while the yawl crept onward with maddening deliberation. Never before in his life had the cook been stricken speechless for so protracted a space of time. He scowled ferociously at the banner of smoke which trailed from the funnel of the approaching steamer and frequently shook a fist at it. He was in a mood to commit murder.



BACK AND FORTH THEY ROCKED AND WHEEZED WHILE THE
YAWL CREPT ONWARD WITH MADDENING DELIBERATION

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The yawl won the race by a distance of less than a mile, a margin of no more than a few minutes. Fenwick's stamina enabled him to follow Alfred over the schooner's low rail, but the seamen had to be hauled out of the boat, flopping on deck and contented to close their eyes in a happy oblivion. The mate tottered to a hatch and sat there, his senses half-drugged by fatigue, merely noticing for the moment that planks, houses, and rigging had lost their shining panoply of ice.

Presently the steamer was veering to slow down within hailing distance, and the British skipper showed a broad, red face above a torn weather-cloth on the bridge as he shouted: —

“Ahoy! Shall I stand by to lend assistance? I say, what were you men doing in the boat?”

“Setting lobster-pots, thank you,” answered the mate. “No help required. We expect to make port some day. Whither bound, if you please?”

“Cardiff to Norfolk,” gruffly barked the other. “Your bally collier looks in a hell of a state to make port. Have you gone dotty? Where are the rest of you?”

“I don't know, I'm sure. If you will be good enough to give us the latitude and longitude, I'll be very much obliged. And please report us as working the vessel in under her own canvas. The Elizabeth Wetherell of Portland. Fenwick, — acting master.”

The beefy Briton bellowed some unintelligible

comment concerning the asinine performance, ducked into the chart-room, and reappeared with the desired information. He was evidently annoyed. These ruffianly looking beggars were robbing him of several thousand pounds of prize money. If he could have put his own men aboard with a hawser while these lunatics were bobbing about in a boat, the schooner would be a derelict and his to salvage by the law of the sea. Disgustedly the *Erith Castle* resumed her voyage to find a cargo while the grimy stokers spat over the side and voiced their sentiments in the sanguinary epithets of their kind.

Alfred had made a bee-line for his desolated kingdom of pots and pans. The mate stood regarding his schooner, piecing together one detail and another to frame a theory of what had probably befallen her. Forward the destruction was most melancholy. The jib-boom had been snapped off, carrying with it the foretopmast, but the great timbers of the bowsprit, which were built into the hull itself, had come through unscathed. It would be possible to hoist a head-sail or two and so compel the vessel to steer. The loss of other topmasts, the broken gaffs and parted stays were not fatal. The big sticks were still in her and there were spare lower sails in the lazaretto. Far more vital was the fact that blocks and ropes were no longer rigidly bound with ice.

Why she had continued to float was a problem fascinating and phenomenal. Fenwick surmised,

for one thing, that the leakage had been mostly through the seams of the deck which had been racked and buckled by the weight of ice and the savage assaults of the seas. Captain Dodge had been mistaken in assuming that the *Elizabeth Wetherell* was mortally injured below the water-line. Warmer weather, an ocean much less violent, and the benignant proximity of the Gulf Stream had vouchsafed the schooner a reprieve in the last extremity.

"One chance in a million, and it broke just right for her," said Fenwick, eager to accept the challenge thus offered him. "She deserves to be given a show to win, and we'll stay with her this time."

He moved aft, walking like a man old and rheumatic, and entered the cabin. The stout doors and hatches had been closed and fastened as the final act of Captain William Dodge. Storm-shutters of plank had protected the skylights. The water had beaten in, but not enough to cause serious damage, and the rooms were fit for occupancy. The mate lighted a lamp and paused in front of a mirror in the bathroom. There faced him a gaunt, blistered, filthy scarecrow with a week's growth of stubble disgracing his chin.

Self-respect revolted against this caricature of "Fenwick, acting master," and he set to work with soap and razor, thereafter ransacking his own room for a change of clothing. The transformation had a singular effect. He ceased to be one of the boat-load

of vagabond castaways who had waived all ceremony, and was the commander of the *Elizabeth Wetherell*, mindful of the dignity of his station, prepared to enforce the authority required by the difficulties of his task.

His absurdly short-handed crew had also felt the compulsion of disciplined habit and the inviolable routine of shipboard. The four sailors had stirred themselves and were poking about in the drenched forecastle, throwing soggy mattresses on deck to dry, hunting for tobacco boxes, making ready to resume their own round of duty. With an axe Alfred had smashed a Georgia pine partition for kindling and the resinous wood was roaring in his rusty range. From the door of the galley issued the entrancing savor of frying ham and coffee boiling in the pot.

Soon the seamen came grinning with heavenly delight, and with tin plates and cups filled they retired to a corner of the deck as was the custom in good weather. Fenwick sat at the table in the mess-room and the cook enjoyed a solitary meal in the galley. Thus was the social code of the sea restored without friction, as a matter to be taken for granted.

It was a lark, the great adventure, this blithe determination to stand by the schooner, do or die, survive or perish. Provided she should be obliging enough to remain on the surface of the ocean, they had no doubt of their ability to sail her into port.

Steam was the servant to make the achievement possible. Fenwick had grown up in a shipyard and could qualify as a pretty fair machinist, fireman, and Yankee tinkerer. His immediate business was with the schooner's engine-room forward. The ice no longer pulled the vessel down by the head and the normal trim was almost restored. The water which had forced its way in had drained into the hold and it was possible to work in the engine-room and machine-shop. Everything depended on setting one winch in motion. All hands were summoned, and they ripped out more of the partition to stuff into the fire-box, adding a few gallons of kerosene.

Fenwick examined the steam pump and found a straight crack extending from end to end of the cylinder. If the brass lining was still intact, it might be worth while trying to patch it in the hope of getting a little suction. At the bench he sawed and drilled two hoops of strap iron, with flanged ends and holes for bolts. These he put into the fire until they glowed cherry red. With pincers he fitted them around the cylinder, and drew them tight with heavy bolts screwed home as far as a three-foot wrench could force them. Shrinking as they cooled, the hoops squeezed together the edges of the crack in the cylinder which had been forced apart by the pressure of the water behind the piston.

“The Finn was a handy cuss, but he just quit

tryin'," observed the admiring Alfred. "When he could n't keep steam up, he says to himself what's the use? He was blamed as a Jonah, Mr. Fenwick, and he hated the old man worse'n snakes, so he figgered he might as well square the reckonin' and let the old hooker go to glory for all he cared."

"That's hardly fair to him, Alfred. He was too near drowned and frozen to care what happened. Well, if this contraption of mine is no good, there is the big wheel pump to turn by hand as a last resort, but you might as well try to lighten the vessel with that busted derby of yours. There are too few of us."

They stoked and sweated and hungrily eyed the steam gauge. It seemed an eternity before a leaky joint began to hiss, while Archie shuffled from the bin in the corner, hurled in another shovelful and chanted:—

"Jes' a leetle mo' coal, Mistah Fenwick. Fifty-three hundred tons down below an' I aim to feed hit all to this yere ol' tin b'iler."

Pipes had frozen and cracked, but they wrapped them with waste, bedclothes, strips of tarpaulin, dancing from one end of the place to another in dense clouds of steam. They had actually succeeded in carrying pressure as far as the nearest winch-engine and Fenwick rushed to open a valve. The steel drum very slowly revolved, balked, turned again, and rumbled jerkily with protesting groans. They

dared not put much faith in it, and so hastened to get the schooner under steerage-way while this squat giant of a winch was willing to help.

Two of them chopped the tangle of wreckage clear of the bows while the others dragged a new jib on deck, and then strung themselves along the spanker boom to cast off the gaskets and tie a reef in the great sail which had been lowered and secured just ahead of the storm. Leading the halliards to the winch, they let the engine struggle with the job of hoisting, and cheered when the canvas crept up the mast. The afternoon passed, and they toiled in the twilight and on under kindly stars which gleamed in a clearing sky. Sail enough, some of it ragged and split, was spread before midnight, and the winch hauled the spanker boom over to windward to shove the stern around and get headway on the forlorn and crippled six-master.

At the wheel, Fenwick felt her respond to the blessed breeze which was strong and steady. He thanked God and took courage. Norfolk was the nearest haven and he had marked his position on an old chart. Calling one of the men aft to steer, he dashed for the engine-room. Archie, who appeared to be a donkey-man of sorts, had started the pump, now that the steam could be spared from the winch. The patched cylinder leaked in a fearsome manner and shot jets of water across the room, but the piston was sucking the sea out of the hold and it gushed

overside in a small, black stream, feeble, irregular, but wonderfully gratifying to hear. And it could be kept going steadily, without pausing to rest, through the twenty-four hours of the day.

With only a helmsman on deck, the Elizabeth Wetherell could be safely left to crawl on her course at a couple of knots' speed. The sidelights had been set, and through the night the men relieved one another at frequent intervals. Fenwick stood his turn at stoking, as did the indispensable Alfred, and so they sailed into a morning all gold and azure, with a sea which caressed and no longer threatened. The *chug, chug*, of the pump had freed them of the killing slavery of lifting the water by brute strength and endurance, and it was in a spirit of frolicsome irony that the sailors sang at breakfast: —

“Was you ever down in Mobile Bay,
Charlie, come tell us an' pump away:
A-screwin' cotton by th' day,
Charlie come tell us an' pump away,
Aye, aye, pump away, —
Charlie come tell us an' pump away.”

The cook had lashed a white apron in the rigging to dry, and with this badge of office tied about his noble girth he felt more hopeful of the omens. A few days in the open air had done him a world of good, he declared, and nothing was better for a fat man with chronic dyspepsy than to be wrecked about once in so often.

“Now, there's folks that 'ud think we had pulled

off somethin' plumb out of the ordinary, Mr. Fenwick," he rambled on. "And there'll be a great hurrah and a regular darn sensation when you come loafin' up to Norfolk with this catawumpused apology of a schooner that was resurrected from her briny grave. But, shucks, it's been a sort of a picnic. I ain't had a real vacation before in years and years. And Captain William Dodge was a tryin' man at times."

"It *is* a big thing," said the mate, without boasting. "And I'm afraid you are a hero, whether you like it or not. I could n't have done it without you."

Alfred was deeply affected. In his experience everybody damned the cook and praise was the rarest commodity in the galley.

"Nonsense! It takes a Fenwick for a job like this. You're the whole show," he exclaimed, twisting his apron in his hands. "Look at the gumption you put into them flighty niggers. Speakin' of salvage, this vessel owes me wages and a new hat. A little spendin' money would be useful, naturally."

"Leave that to me, Alfred. We'll fight this schooner in somehow, and then the owners must pay the piper."

Through another day and night they worked and slept while the elements were merciful. The odds were so evenly balanced that a passing squall might have sent them to the bottom, but they maintained an illogical confidence in the ultimate issue. The steam pump suffered a relapse and indicated that its

malady was fatal in spite of the doctors. It chugged no less industriously, but the stream of water had dwindled to a trickle. The strain and pressure of the motion under canvas caused the racked planking to leak forward. It seemed as though the *Elizabeth Wetherell* floated by no more than a hair's-breadth.

There came ploughing up from the southward an ocean-going tow-boat, running light with no barges to hamper her speed. Power was expressed in the bold sweep of her lines, in the slashing ease with which the steel prow flung the seas aside. Straight for the schooner she tore, lifting with a long roll to show the red paint below the water-line, and the black smoke poured from a raking funnel which was banded with a white stripe. Through a pair of glasses Fenwick read the name in gilt letters on the wheel-house, *Undaunted* of Norfolk.

"Virginia Towing and Transportation Company. One of Captain Joe Dabney's boats," he said aloud.

"Yes, suh," grinned the helmsman. "The bigges' one he got. I done went as deck-hand one time in th' *Undaunted*, but, great goodness, this yere Terry Cochran what goes master of her was too bodacious an' high-steppin'. He sho'ly was. A swif' man, and it was slam-bang 'tween Boston an' Key West or any ol' place. That ain't no tow-boat the way he run her. She is one o' them submarines."

The *Undaunted* rounded to and held a position no more than a few yards from the schooner's quar-



"WHERE IS THE OLD MAN AND THE REST OF YOU?"

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ter. From a wheel-house window Captain Terry Cochran leaned out in his shirt-sleeves and gazed with an air of humorous mystification. He looked bold and active, a young man of a sandy complexion and a dancing eye. Waving a hand to Fenwick, he shouted in a singularly pleasant voice: —

“Where is the old man and the rest of you? And for the love of Mike, why are n’t you flying some kind of a distress signal?”

“We don’t feel distressed about anything, thank you,” was the astonishing answer. “The skipper quit the ship a week ago, with his wife and eight men. We left at the same time, but decided to join her again. Has nothing been heard of the launch?”

“Not a word. I was sent to look for the schooner three days ago. We reckoned you had been blown off to the south’ard and were in bad shape. The big blow smashed a lot of ‘em.”

“Sent by the owners were you?” asked Fenwick.

“You can search me. Cap’n Joe Dabney ‘phoned the order to the wharf where I was coaling. It may have been on his own account. My business was to beat it.”

“I don’t need you, of course, Captain Cochran — ”

“You don’t look it! On the level, Mister Mate, I’d hate to sit in a poker game with you. Need me? Why, that crazy old coffin of yours is officially dead. She was abandoned at sea. You just told me so.”

“We are holding a wake over her,” said Fenwick,

without a smile. "If I give you a hawser, what do you propose to call it? Towage or salvage?"

"Salvage to be sure," cried Terry Cochran, whose temper was short. "You can't afford to risk bad weather. Better let your boss fight it out with Cap'n Joe."

"Towage or nothing," as vigorously declared the acting master.

"Then I will come aboard and talk it over," was the reply from the tug. "'T is more like a floating mad-house than anything I have run afoul of in a blue moon."

A boat was dropped from the Undaunted, and presently these doughty antagonists met and shook hands upon the unkempt deck of the Elizabeth Wetherell. At a guess, they were about of an age, fine specimens of the manhood that is forged by the vicissitudes of the sea. The mate, of a pure New England strain, was quietly pertinacious, seldom emotional, while the tow-boat captain, eager, restless, impatient, betrayed the dash of Irish in him.

"Well, by Cripes!" ejaculated the latter, breaking into Fenwick's story. "Four niggers and a cook for a ship's company! And you have the nerve to tell me to my face that you don't care whether I hook on to you or not!"

"I am ready to take a tow, if you will sit down at the cabin table and sign a paper waiving all claim for salvage, Captain Cochran."

"It would serve you right to leave you to founder, Mr. Fenwick."

"Oh, we are used to that. We found this ship a lawful derelict and we took possession. And no pirate of a Norfolk tow-boat can bluff us out of what belongs to us."

"You are a bunch of ungrateful blackguards," hotly exclaimed Terry Cochran, but repented before Fenwick could retaliate. "I beg your pardon," he added in milder tones. "Five days in an open boat would make any man fight like a wolf for his rights. And you will not leave the question to Cap'n Joe Dabney, the squarest tow-boat man on the coast?"

"There is nothing to argue," insisted Fenwick. "What you can't seem to get through your head is that we are no longer members of the original crew of the Elizabeth Wetherell. That rating was lost when we abandoned her by order of the master, Captain William Dodge. We found her and took possession. And you propose to take her away from us if I am stupid enough to leave you a loophole for salvage."

"A sea-lawyer and a corker!" was the comment of Terry Cochran. "And you have your two feet under you, at that, and a fist that I am not anxious to get in the way of."

"You will sign a waiver, and refer the towage bill to your office?" was Fenwick's stubborn response.

"Sure I will, or it will come to a clinch at this rate. 'T would be a great pity to steam away and let you

tryin'," observed the admiring Alfred. "When he could n't keep steam up, he says to himself what's the use? He was blamed as a Jonah, Mr. Fenwick, and he hated the old man worse'n snakes, so he figgered he might as well square the reckonin' and let the old hooker go to glory for all he cared."

"That's hardly fair to him, Alfred. He was too near drowned and frozen to care what happened. Well, if this contraption of mine is no good, there is the big wheel pump to turn by hand as a last resort, but you might as well try to lighten the vessel with that busted derby of yours. There are too few of us."

They stoked and sweated and hungrily eyed the steam gauge. It seemed an eternity before a leaky joint began to hiss, while Archie shuffled from the bin in the corner, hurled in another shovelful and chanted:—

"Jes' a leetle mo' coal, Mistah Fenwick. Fifty-three hundred tons down below an' I aim to feed hit all to this yere ol' tin b'iler."

Pipes had frozen and cracked, but they wrapped them with waste, bedclothes, strips of tarpaulin, dancing from one end of the place to another in dense clouds of steam. They had actually succeeded in carrying pressure as far as the nearest winch-engine and Fenwick rushed to open a valve. The steel drum very slowly revolved, balked, turned again, and rumbled jerkily with protesting groans. They

dared not put much faith in it, and so hastened to get the schooner under steerage-way while this squat giant of a winch was willing to help.

Two of them chopped the tangle of wreckage clear of the bows while the others dragged a new jib on deck, and then strung themselves along the spanker boom to cast off the gaskets and tie a reef in the great sail which had been lowered and secured just ahead of the storm. Leading the halliards to the winch, they let the engine struggle with the job of hoisting, and cheered when the canvas crept up the mast. The afternoon passed, and they toiled in the twilight and on under kindly stars which gleamed in a clearing sky. Sail enough, some of it ragged and split, was spread before midnight, and the winch hauled the spanker boom over to windward to shove the stern around and get headway on the forlorn and crippled six-master.

At the wheel, Fenwick felt her respond to the blessed breeze which was strong and steady. He thanked God and took courage. Norfolk was the nearest haven and he had marked his position on an old chart. Calling one of the men aft to steer, he dashed for the engine-room. Archie, who appeared to be a donkey-man of sorts, had started the pump, now that the steam could be spared from the winch. The patched cylinder leaked in a fearsome manner and shot jets of water across the room, but the piston was sucking the sea out of the hold and it gushed

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"Tie the boat up till four o'clock, Terry. Then you pull a Dutch steamer into the stream from number four pier at Lambert's Point. Come into the office. What's this about Captain Dodge? I wired Portland as soon as you were sighted, and a reply came from Amos Runlett not ten minutes ago. It's addressed to old man Dodge. And he left his ship with part of the crew aboa'd?"

Instead of replying, Cochran bolted through the doorway and joined his employer at the window inside, dragging two chairs together and helping himself to a cigar.

"Listen, Cap'n Joe. This fine, large schooner was abandoned in a sinking condition. Get that? God knows why she didn't sink, but, anyhow, the mate and the cook and four niggers in a yawl found her after the gale and grabbed her as a derelict. When I came along they were heading her in for the Capes as happy and free from care as a joy-ride. You would have laughed, but it came near getting my goat. This mate, name of Fenwick, solid like a brick house, had a notion of tipping me overboard because I hinted at a salvage job for my boat. He was civil enough, but cleared for action. You could see it in his eye. You know the kind. They raise 'em on the Maine coast and the wise guy does n't crowd 'em too far."

Captain Dabney harkened with bland enjoyment, as though the discomfiture of the intrepid young

master of the Undaunted appealed to his sense of humor.

"Put a crimp in yo' billy-be-damned code of tow-boat manners, did he, Terry? Straight towage?"

"He has my signature," was his sheepish admission, "and you will have to stand behind it."

"Of cou'se, Terry, my son. It's worth something to me to have you told where you get off once in a while. Otherwise you are liable to ride clear over me."

Mr. Cochran indignantly denied the aspersion, and went on to say: "I swung the schooner out of the channel and left her on the mud. This Fenwick wants you to send down a machinist and a cook and two or three men this afternoon. His tarriers are worn to the bone and he expects to send them ashore to recuperate."

"He had better come along himself, Terry. I'm glad to do anything in my power. Amos Runlett will be down from Portland in two or three days to have the vessel docked and refitted. If Mr. Fenwick wishes money for himself or his men, I am ready to honor his request and charge same to the ship's account."

"He ought to be in dry-dock himself instead of sticking to that condemned old coal-hod," ungrudgingly suggested Terry. "Can you find a reliable ship-keeper to send down with me, Cap'n Joe?"

"That's the idea, boy. Present my compliments

to Mr. Fenwick, if you please, and info'm him that you are to remove him by fo'ce if necessary."

"After you, Cap'n Joe," grinned the tow-boat skipper. "'T is my firm belief that moral suasion is the one best bet for me."

Later in the afternoon, when the Undaunted had slipped away from the wharf, Captain Dabney lingered in the big room to discuss with several visiting seafarers the narrative of the Elizabeth Wetherell. They were a staid, respectable group, men who stood well in their profession and kept sober ashore and at sea, the master of an eight-thousand-ton freighter from the Far East, another in a full-rigged sailing ship under charter for the Mediterranean, a third commanding a monster of an oil-tanker recently launched at Newport News. A schooner captain or two completed the jury of experts which passed on the merits of Dudley Fenwick's achievement in slow, thoughtful comment and question.

"A young man's game. He played it well," said one of them.

"Very creditable, indeed," agreed an elderly critic. "He ought to be given a ship."

"How old is he, Captain Dabney?"

"Twenty-five or near it, accordin' to Terry Cochran. We may learn wisdom with years, gentlemen, but we sigh for the days when we were natural-bo'n fools."

"Quite right. This Captain William Dodge, — a hard man and a competent seaman, I am told. But he was too old to endure the breaking strain. I am afraid he has paid the price."

"Yes. Dead or alive, he has paid it," solemnly affirmed another. "This affair of quitting a ship before her time, — when she was seaworthy enough for the mate to fetch her in, — there is no extenuation. One can't argue that sort of thing with his owners."

They decided to await the arrival of the mate of the Elizabeth Wetherell. Curiosity suggested that they appraise him for themselves. Shortly before six o'clock the deep-throated whistle of the Undaunted blew for the wharf. While she was making fast for the night, Terry Cochran ushered in the castaways of whom Fenwick alone was unabashed. The others huddled near the door, Alfred Whittier and the four negro sailors, burdened with an odd collection of sea-stained bags and bundles. In the presence of the party of gravely attentive shipmasters they felt themselves to be in the wrong place, unexpectedly trespassing upon the quarter-deck.

Captain Joe introduced the mate and the visitors shook hands with him. They were ready with a phrase or two of commendation, nothing effusive, merely to signify that they knew what he had done and approved it. He was pleased beyond measure. Once before, when he had shaken hands with the three rugged old masters of the Fenwick schooners in the

little office at the shipyard, after his father's death, it had seemed like a ceremony of initiation to the fraternity of the sea, but this Norfolk episode was more a recognition of things accomplished, not merely hoped for.

It was to be shared with others, however, and he led them forward, the blushing Alfred as his "acting mate," the Holt brothers, Archie and Sidney, who advanced with the limber elegance of a cake-walk, the bow-legged man with the grizzled wool who looked lost and forsaken away from a ship, and the spindling, jet-black foremast hand who resembled a camp-meeting preacher and was said to have carved several persons that disagreed with him.

"I will pay off these sailors and they can look out for themselves," said Captain Joe. "As for the prodigy of a cook —"

"He goes to a good hotel until I receive my orders," declared Fenwick. "I am personally responsible for whatever amount he wishes to draw for glad raiment and moving-pictures."

"Kin we-all sign with you ag'in, suh?" anxiously inquired Archie.

"You done said it 'fo' me, buddy," echoed Sidney, flashing two rows of white teeth. "Somethin' doin' when a nigger sails with Mistah Fenwick."

"Leave word here where I can find you, boys," advised the mate. "There is salvage due, remember."

"Seems to me we had fun enough without extra pay for it," came from the unworldly Alfred.

Fenwick was about to pilot him to a hotel, but Captain Joe interposed. "Please let me send a clerk with him. It will give me great pleasure, Mr. Fenwick, if you will be good enough to spend the night at my house. I have 'phoned for my car, and also took the liberty of info'min' my daughter that you would be with me for supper."

"But — but I look like a tramp," stammered the young man, flinching at mention of the daughter.

"Easily explained," calmly persisted the host, "but if yo' personal appearance is disturbin' yo' sense of decorum, we can touch at a haberdasher's for shirts and fixin's. As for clothes, I have a closet full of white flannels that shrunk most infernally, and I can fit you to a dot. Mrs. Dabney is sojournin' with friends in Roanoke County and you will meet only my daughter, Miss Ivy Belle. As a chap-on, I reckon I can pass Lloyd's survey."

There was no refusing a hospitality so genuine. Terry Cochran, delaying to glance at the order-book and ascertain what work was ahead for the Undaunted, may have heard the cordial speech and possibly it accounted for the marked brusqueness with which he said good-night. With a gleam of amused interest, Fenwick surmised that Miss Ivy Belle Dabney was no stranger to the dashing Cochran.

A colored chauffeur presently drove them through

the city and into the open country over a road which, after several miles, swerved to approach a bay and the riding-lights of anchored vessels, with the beacons and gas-buoys winking red or white to warn and beckon. The car turned in at a driveway which led through grounds of several acres to a white house, wide, low, and comfortable. Unlike the compact New England dwelling familiar to Dudley Fenwick, which was designed to defy a more hostile climate, this Virginia home seemed like a hamlet of separate buildings widely scattered, servants' quarters, stables, sheds, and what-not, as the guest discerned their shadowy outlines.

Several dogs rushed out to bark a delirious welcome. A dusky retainer with a lavish display of white shirt-front threw open the doors and made haste to snatch Fenwick's suit-case, bowing him into a spacious hall where a six-foot back-log blazed in a cavern of a brick fireplace. Almost instantly this thoughtful attendant reappeared with a tray and cocktails.

"Yo' very good health, Mr. Fenwick," exclaimed the host as he raised his glass. "Here's to fair weather and a better acquaintance. Pardon me if you do not indulge —"

"Very seldom, sir, but in honor of the occasion and 'a safe deliverance for the good ship, with God's assistance,' as the old-time manifest used to read, — I wish every happiness to you and yours."

They drank the pledge, Captain Joe's smile

frankly affectionate. He had been strongly, impulsively attracted to this manly sailor whose behavior was that of a No'thern gentleman, by Godfrey, — none of your uncouth roustabouts who had cussed and kicked their way out of a schooner's fo'castle into the cabin.

"This lazy limb of Satan will show you to yo' room," said he, indicating the solemn youth with the tray and sternly admonishing him: "Find Cap'n Fenwick everything he wants, Geo'ge, and you better had step lively. He carries a colored crew and when he bats an eye they come near jumpin' out of their skins."

Dressing was a luxurious process which began with a hot bath and ended with the borrowed white flannels that fitted as trimly as Captain Joe had predicted. The whole episode of the visit was agreeably flavored with novelty. As mate with Captain Sam Pickering, Fenwick had lain in Southern ports loading pine lumber, — Savannah, Brunswick, Jacksonville, — but he knew only the water-fronts and restaurants. And this sort of kindness, informal, gracious, warm-hearted, was not apt to be encountered by a stranger in the down-east ports of Boston or Portland, where one's credentials were scanned and entrance granted in a cautious, not to say suspicious, manner.

The guest who came downstairs to meet the daughter of the house required no apologies in his behalf. This was the verdict of Captain Joe, who

stood with his back to the fire. Fenwick's white clothes admirably set off a robust physique held easily erect, and an honest, friendly countenance redly tanned by wind and sun. To credit him with a wholesome modesty was no more than he deserved. The simple doctrine of duty, inherited and acquired, ruled his conduct, and therefore praise or flattery was unlikely to turn his head. There are men who, without brilliancy, create an impression of undeviating constancy to the truth of things as they see them and, as a consequence, they bind their friends with hooks of steel.

Miss Ivy Belle Dabney was engaged in pelting with cushions a corpulent bull-dog whose growls were horrendous. At perceiving the personable young man she gave the creature a cushion to throttle at its leisure and waited on the hearth-rug while her father said:—

“Honey, this is Mr. Dudley Fenwick, of the Elizabeth Wetherell, who has, most fo’tunately for us, cheated the devil and the deep sea.”

“He looks as if he might, I’m sure, dad,” replied a sweet, indolent voice, “and I positively refuse to suspect him of raising the devil like some of your Norfolk friends. How do you do, Mr. Fenwick.”

“Thank you for the certificate of character, Miss Dabney. May I file it with my owners?”

“No other references required?” she demurely suggested.

"You finished it for me. I am not quick at compliments."

"You No'therners are frightfully slow, and the down-easters are the worst. When one of you says something really pretty to a girl, she writes it down and frames it as a curio."

"See here, child," cautioned Captain Joe, pretending earnestness, "if I were you, I would n't be so brash with Mr. Fenwick. Get him started and he is a powerful hard man to stop. My authority for the statement is the devastatin' Terry Cochran."

"That little faint-heart? He shivers when I say booh to him."

"You ought to feel sorry for him, Miss Dabney," ventured Dudley. "I can guess what his symptoms are. Look at me, already. I shall never be the same man again."

"Old stuff, dad, but his form is improving," was the shockingly flippant comment of Ivy Belle.

Another colored stripling, hitherto undiscovered, announced supper with an ornate flourish. When they were seated at the small round table, with the candles lighted, Fenwick had opportunity to study the youthful hostess who reigned with a royal impertinence which rather dismayed him. She was small and slender, childishly so, but the evening gown, almost too elaborate for an occasion so informal, revealed a lovely contour of neck and shoul-

ders. Dark eyes and dusky hair, sensitive lips which smiled or pouted in swift transitions of mood, she seemed to Fenwick as capricious as the tropics. That he was expected to make love to her, as the inevitable tribute to her charms, was undreamed of in his philosophy. Flirtation as a pastime was an uncharted course.

"What did you do, Mr. Fenwick, to make dad rave about you over the 'phone?" she politely inquired. "He hears so much about shipwrecks and other thrilling stunts that it's not at all easy to set him going."

This was wickedly intended to tease him, but the sailor stood his ground and smilingly countered:—

"And do you always appear as bored as this, Miss Dabney, when he brings one of the unlucky beggars home?""

"What a horrid thing to say, Mr. Fenwick! I was trying to be nice and draw you out. Most men welcome any old excuse to talk about themselves."

"You, Ivy Belle, behave," cried Captain Joe, "or I'll tote Mr. Fenwick back to town and put him up at the club."

This threat frightened the wilful daughter, who begged forgiveness with a pathos that could not be denied.

"I can tell you what he did, child," declared the aroused parent, "and I am proud to have him

under my roof. Let him wriggle and blush all he pleases."

Fenwick took alarm at this and plausibly explained:—

"I should have sent another telegram or two in Norfolk. May I telephone the messages from here, Captain Dabney?"

"Coward!" exclaimed Ivy Belle, with withering scorn. "Afraid to listen to dad's praises! I reckon I'll have to tell Terry Cochran on you."

"The natural reluctance of a brave man to have his deeds flaunted in his face," loudly observed Captain Joe. "Miss Dabney, you are a disgrace to yo' bringin' up. That finishin' school up No'th scamped the job."

Fenwick retired to the hall while his ardent biographer began an illustrated lecture. A napkin folded lengthwise was the Gulf Stream, a celery dish represented the drifting six-master, and the yawl was a silver salt-shaker. Ivy Belle advised using the mustard pot for the Undaunted. The symbolism, when applied to Captain Terry Cochran, was sufficiently obvious. Through the arched doorway it was easily possible to hear what Dudley Fenwick was saying to the telegraph operator, and the first message, to Aunt Mary Fenwick, was uninteresting. Ivy Belle, however, forgot to follow her father's eloquence when there came to her ear words of more significant import.

*Miss Kate Eldredge,
Care Public Library,
Spring Haven, Maine.*

*Hope you care to learn that overdue vessel safely returned
to port of departure. Trust all's well with you.*

"My goodness! but that is a chilly message to send a girl," mused Ivy Belle, resting her chin in her palm and scrutinizing Fenwick from beneath fringed lashes. "They must love each other madly. Five days in an open boat, and miss a gorgeous chance to say that only the thought of her kept him alive! If a man treated me that way, I should hate him."

The salt-shaker was about to rejoin the celery dish, and a corn muffin (the Erith Castle, British tramp) made a race of it to capture the tempting derelict. Swept along by his own eloquence, Captain Joe failed to notice his daughter's inattention nor had he overheard the cause of it. Ivy Belle had resolved to be very agreeable to Mr. Fenwick, wondering how long he might be detained in Norfolk. The idea of his leaving her to telegraph another girl! It was a provocation which she could not possibly overlook. When the young man returned to the table, she informed him:—

"If you have to go to town in the morning, I shall drive the car myself and spend the day there. Then I can call for you and dad at five o'clock."

"But I must stay aboard the schooner after this," replied Fenwick, perceptibly wavering.

"Piffle!" ejaculated Captain Joe. "The man I sent down in charge is a retired master mariner and you can set your clock by him. You have been under a heavy strain, my dear boy, and you are liable to crack if you don't take care of yo'self. There is nothing doing until Amos Runlett comes prancin' into Norfolk. I know him. He'll be under a full head of steam every dashed minute."

"Please don't rile Captain Joseph Dabney," besought Ivy Belle. "He is powerful hard to live with, and he may fly off in one of his tantrums."

"I have been trained to obey orders," said Fenwick, yielding without a struggle.

Later they settled themselves before the great fire in the hall where the chairs were so large and comfortable that Fenwick fought a delicious drowsiness and was caught in the act of smothering several yawns. Captain Joe denounced himself as a thoughtless, inconsiderate scoundrel who should know better than to torture a guest who was dying on his feet for lack of a good night's sleep. He thereupon laid hands on Fenwick and hustled him off to bed, to the grieving disappointment of Ivy Belle who said, with a wistful cadence:—

"I am so glad you have promised to come back to-morrow night, Mr. Fenwick. It is my only consolation for losing you now."

It was six o'clock next morning when the sailor came out of heavy slumber, expecting to hear the

clang of the ship's bell and the thump of boots on the deck above him. The room seemed curiously steady and, realizing where he was, he laughed and prepared to turn out for the day, a man made over again. His own clothes had been carefully cleaned and pressed overnight, he discovered.

It was Captain Dabney's habit to bestir himself at an early hour and enjoy himself before breakfast in what Ivy Belle called "infesting the premises." There were the dogs, several horses, and a superfluous number of negroes of assorted sizes who received their commands for the day and executed them with noisy inefficiency. Fenwick sauntered out and met his host near the poultry yard.

"A brisk, snappy mo'nin'," cried Captain Joe, "and you shape up like a two-year-old. A walk down to my wharf and boat-house as a breather and then we'll adjourn inside. Is it presumin' to ask you one or two questions?"

"Go as far as you like, sir. I shall look to you for advice, if you don't mind."

"I am at yo' service, my boy," was the sincere reply, "and it will do no harm to have it known when you lock horns with Amos Runlett. Years ago, before the big schooners cinched the coal trade out of Norfolk, Fenwick vessels came here, — Wesley Amazeen, the sinful old rip, in the Anne Dudley, and Elmer Gallant in the Mary Fenwick. They used to speak mighty well of Israel Fenwick, of

Spring Haven, and I reckon you are some kin of his. A son? But you need no recommendations. Since Amos Runlett took hold of the Wetherell fleet, I have had all his towin' business at this end of the run. You might call me his Norfolk agent, but that part of it does n't amount to much. Most of his business is transacted between the Portland office, the captains, and the coal companies. Know him personally, do you?"

"Amos Runlett? I met him only once," answered Fenwick, "when I asked him for a berth in the *Elizabeth*."

"A sharp man, — very much our idea of a Yankee trader, — but not what you'd term *graspin'* in a small way. Wits honed to a wire edge and always manœuvrin' to hand the other fellow the sho't end of the bargain. It's the way he interprets the rules of the game. That grand old effigy, 'Pinch-penny' Dodge, was bred from a different litter. You comprehend me, do you, Fenwick?"

"Ambition and the love of power for the one — mere greed for the other. Is that the distinction, Captain Dabney?"

"A bull's-eye! All of which leads up to the advice to keep a close upper lip and play the cards close to yo' chest. And the Virginia Towin' and Transportation Company is always within hailin' distance, understand."

"You refer to the question of salvage, of course,

sir. That is my only issue with Amos Runlett. But if I should bring you into the dispute, what about your business relations with the Wetherell fleet? Exclusive towage amounts to thousands of dollars a year."

"When I let a contemptible stack of dollars obtrude their damn selves between me and justice to a friend, it's time for Joe Dabney to crawl off somewhere and die," declaimed this quixotic ally who had been unaware, twenty-four hours earlier than this, that Dudley Fenwick even existed. "I took a fancy to you, son, and I'll see you through. How are you fixed at home? Any money or influence of your own?"

Dudley told the story of the shipyard, not to invoke sympathy, but because it was fair to confide in the man who displayed so much amazing confidence in him. Captain Joe approved. To his mind there was nothing foolish in standing by a losing venture when one was in honor bound. It was the only course which a gentleman could choose. In a fatherly manner he laid a hand upon Fenwick's arm and said: —

"I sized you up as that kind when I took you into my house and permitted you to meet my daughter. I don't cotton to every Tom, Dick, and Harry of a ship's officer that steers into my shop."

Changing the subject abruptly, he inquired: —

"Do you cherish any ill-feelin' toward Captain

Terry Cochran? Yo' debate with him was not precisely amicable, I understand."

"I think him a corker, sir. He must be a number-one tow-boat man, to be given one of the finest boats on the coast."

"I am pleased to hear you compliment him, Fenwick. Give him the Undaunted? I could n't help myself. He delivered the goods. I take the liberty of bringin' him into the conversation because you will meet him in my house, very likely. And — er — if you will be good enough to make allowances fo' a disposition that is like handlin' a red-hot poker, — Ivy Belle is a tantalizin' child who enjoys settin' young men by the ears, and Terry is an easy mark. He is well-bo'n and related to me by marriage. Ashore, you will find him careful of his speech. His afflicted parents could do nothing with him, and after he was fired from the Virginia Military Institute and bounced from the freshman class of the University of Virginia, his father implored me to take this hellion of an offspring and make him or break him. I cussed and kicked him into one of my smaller tugs as an ornery deck-hand. That was five years ago."

"He has the seafaring instinct and the knack of keeping men up to their work," said Fenwick, without envy. "I feel ever so much obliged to you, sir. Mr. Cochran and I can avoid collision, I'm sure."

"Yo' perfo'mance holds the centre of the stage at present," chuckled Captain Joe, "which makes

it dead certain that Terry will come to the bat with somethin' mo' spectacular. He is just naturally built that way."

Motoring into Norfolk at the side of Ivy Belle was what Fenwick felt inclined to pronounce also "brisk and snappy." She drove with a speed and non-chalance which threatened to deplete the colored population, all the while chatting in a manner no longer indolent. Her interest in the young man's perils and escapes upon the sea was alluring and vivacious. He preferred to extol the cook as the more entertaining personage of the drama, a hero of imposing dimensions.

Miss Dabney expressed a desire to behold this Alfred Whittier in the flesh, and luck would have it that they should flash past him in front of a modestly respectable hotel. The car halted. Fenwick's heart warmed at the sight of him. It was like a reunion with a member of the family. A pearl-gray derby, white waistcoat, and new suit of blue gave to Alfred's portly presence an aspect of dignified rehabilitation far removed from the galley of a foundering schooner. He quite outshone his superior officer in the automobile, who heartily exclaimed:—

"A few more shipwrecks and you will be mistaken for a banker or something, Alfred. Enjoying yourself?"

"Takin' by an' large, there's worse towns than Norfolk, Mr. Fenwick. I ain't been here for any length of time since I was hauled ashore in a breeches-

buoy this side o' Winter Quarter Shoal. I just come from the tow-boat office. Telegram waitin' for you — mebbe from Amos Runlett."

"Thanks. You had better stand by while I read it. He may have sent instructions."

The cook, ever susceptible to beauty, was eyeing Captain Dabney's daughter, and being a sentimental old soft-head, he promptly wove a golden romance for Fenwick, the poor but honest mate of a six-master. Blamed if she did n't sort of act as if she owned the fellow already. Alfred's gossipy speculations were interrupted by Ivy Belle, who made him captive with a smile as she said: —

"Please jump in the car, Mr. Whittier, and we can take you right down to the wharf with us."

"Holy mackeril, ma'am, don't you realize I'm nothin' but a ship's cook?"

"Here, stow that, Alfred," cheerfully put in Captain Joe. "Hop in with me and have a cigar. A sea-cook of yo' description is an honor to the merchant service. Any time you tire of slammin' around in a schooner you are welcome to a tow-boat job."

Alfred's pride was effulgent and perspiration bedewed his brow. At the office Fenwick read aloud the telegram which was dated from Boston.

Will arrive Friday morning. Tell Dabney tow vessel to wharf for discharging cargo before docking at Newport News. Remain on board and hold your men.

A. Runlett.

This mandate displeased Ivy Belle, who protested:—

“But Mr. Fenwick has a more impo’tant engagement, dad. How silly to say he can’t spend the night with us. Why should he have to stay on board?”

“Amos Runlett would n’t dare to interfere with your plans, honey, if he had been fo’ewarned.”

“I hope to be in port for some time,” said Fenwick, “unless the new skipper, whoever he is, prefers to sign another mate.”

“Then your visit with us is merely postponed,” exclaimed Ivy Belle. “I am so glad — for dad’s sake. Disappointment makes him hard to live with.”

The cook shook his head and moved away from the group. This affair was bowling along under a tops’l breeze, he said to himself. A heiress, by Jonas! and probably she had means of her own. And she treated the mate as free and easy as an old shoe. He watched Fenwick follow Miss Dabney out to the car and stand chatting with her. This would be spicy news for the folks in Spring Haven.

CHAPTER VI

WAS SHE A DERELICT?

THERE were no tugs at the wharf and Fenwick hired a launch to take him down to the Elizabeth Wetherell. The temporary crew had proved trustworthy and he told them to do no more work than was required to keep the schooner afloat. It seemed advisable that Amos Runlett should inspect her as she was when towed in from sea. The voice of a martinet had spoken in the telegram and Fenwick took warning. In the afternoon the Elizabeth was moved to a berth beneath the coal towers and hoisting buckets, and the hatch covers removed. The mate ate supper with the elderly ship-keeper who was quite deaf and droned of the fine commands he had held in steam. To pass the evening they drearily played cards. It was a stupid anti-climax, to be dragged from the pleasant hospitality of Captain Joe and the society of Ivy Belle.

Before noon next day a tug came alongside and the neat, spruce figure of Amos Runlett stepped nimbly from one deck to the other. Pulling at the clipped moustache, a hand in his pocket, he raked the schooner with a quick, intelligent vision before saying a word to Fenwick. It was a studied indifference toward the subordinate, designed to forestall any

display of importance on the young man's part. At that age they ought to be clubbed under for their own good. In Portland it had been a matter of giving employment to Israel Fenwick's son. In the present situation they were master and man with, in all probability, a large amount of money at issue between them. Crisply patronizing was the owner's first speech.

"How are you, Fenwick? Feel happier, I suppose, to have me take the business off your hands. The vessel is n't as badly mauled as I expected to find her. No great job to fetch her in, was it?"

The mate's face was rather grim and it hardened in a dogged fixity of purpose as he replied:—

"You are mistaken, Mr. Runlett. It was no holiday picnic for us to save your abandoned schooner."

"Ah, I see. You wired no particulars. I thought she might have been dismasted."

"If you will come into the cabin, sir, we can untwist the yarn, every strand of it. Dinner will be ready soon, if you care to join me."

"Galley still in commission? Thank you. I'll enjoy it. Your Alfred Whittier is the top cook of the fleet. That fish chowder of his is famous in a dozen ports."

"Sorry, but I sent him ashore to rest and refit. He never whimpered, but the voyage punished him pretty badly."

"Was he sick or hurt?"

"No, indeed! Next to fish chowder, shipwrecks are his specialty."

"But I wired you to have your men ready to present their evidence, Fenwick. I want to question them separately."

"I can muster them this afternoon, Mr. Runlett, but what do you mean by their evidence? Is not my word enough? They can add nothing to it. This is not a trial in court. I was the officer in command of this ship."

There was no anxious deference in Fenwick's demeanor nor did he conceal a natural resentment. Amos Runlett preceded him into the cabin, with another glance aloft and along the battle-scarred decks. There was a musty smell below, but no disorder, and the personal property of Captain William Dodge and his Amelia had been carefully locked in their own rooms. The absence of all their little intimate belongings — the pictures, cushions, books, the darning-basket, the phonograph — made the cabin seem desolate and untenanted. It was as cheerless as an empty house, as disquieting as a haunted house, for the spirit of tragic mystery inhabited it.

Amos Runlett, unimaginative, hardly inured to the hazards of the sea, shivered as he moved a chair to the bare reading-table and faced the mate across it. There was a moment's silence. Fenwick absently filled his pipe from a rubber pouch, and hesitated to light it. The interdict of Amelia Dodge was not easily

forgotten. Amos Runlett's fingers drummed upon the table, a sign of nervousness uncommon for him, as he exclaimed abruptly:—

“Bring me the log. You wrote the daily entries and are willing to swear to the truth of them.”

“Captain Dodge took the ship's log and papers with him,” replied Fenwick, none too gently. “It was the proper thing to do. I have kept a rough record since then. The statements are true. Why should they be anything else?”

“Then Captain Dodge left no record of his reasons for quitting the vessel?”

“Nothing in writing, sir. I am perfectly well able to recall what happened.”

“Let me have it, from the moment when the weather changed and you saw it was coming on to blow out of the nor'east.”

Lucidly, in a matter-of-fact manner and with a seaman's scrupulous regard for detail, the mate recounted the failure of the *Elizabeth Wetherell* to gain a refuge in Portland Harbor, and the helpless, hopeless retreat to the southward. He had no word of adverse criticism for Captain Dodge and this loyal reticence caused the frowning listener to interrupt:—

“He may be alive to speak for himself, but I doubt it. The launch should have landed him long ago. If he was taken off by a steamer the rescue would have been reported. I want a straight answer, Fenwick.

Would you have abandoned the schooner under the same circumstances?"

"I might have hung on a day longer, sir. She looked as if she were about to sink, but there was a little life in her. The ice was the worst part of it."

"Then you accuse her master of bad judgment?"

"I accuse him of nothing," indignantly returned the mate, who thought the cross-examination unfair.

Amos Runlett reflected, his expression perplexed, before he resumed:—

"Your first voyage in a six-master, and you knew more about it than Captain William Dodge."

Fenwick was puzzled in his turn. He had reasonably looked for credit, if not praise, and his employer's attitude was one of arrogant, prejudiced hostility almost undisguised. Behind it lay a suspicion, something as yet undisclosed, which aroused the mate to demand, with a fiery insistence:—

"Show your hand, Mr. Runlett. We won't get anywhere at this rate. I wish I knew what you are driving at."

The autocrat bristled at this contumacious challenge which not even one of his veteran shipmasters would dare fling at him. Innuendo was a poor weapon and he laid it aside, hammering the words home with a truculent vehemence as he said:—

"It is queer from start to finish, Fenwick, as queer as hell. Disagreeable, am I? Well, those sensitive feelings of yours may be harrowed fore and aft before

we come to the end of it. I dropped in to see Captain Joe Dabney this morning, and he told me how you had refused to let his boat take hold of you on a salvage basis. Right enough, if you had been guarding your owners' interests, but you propose to claim salvage for yourself, I understand. Dabney laughed as if the joke was on me. How much do you figure to make this joke cost me?"

Fenwick answered quietly, holding himself in hand, for he could not afford to let temper becloud the logic and the facts.

"The Elizabeth Wetherell was built ten years ago, Mr. Runlett, at a cost of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Depreciation and low freights have reduced her present value to a hundred thousand. This is no guesswork. My salvage claim is for a quarter of the actual value of the ship, and I might reasonably demand a larger percentage. I will settle for twenty-five thousand dollars."

Amos Runlett stared, grunted, and mockingly ejaculated:—

"That is a generous proposition! I'm surprised. Letting me down easy, are n't you, young man? I guess Joe Dabney was right, but it's a rotten poor joke. In the first place, how do I know this vessel was a derelict? You say so, and your witnesses are an old wind-bag of a cook who would sell himself cheap, and four nigger sailors that I could buy for a bottle of booze. What was to prevent your hatch-

ing this scheme together? You tell me you were five days in an open boat and then stepped back aboard a schooner that was sinking when you left her! What kind of a story is that to ask me to swallow, hook, line, and sinker? Twenty-five thousand fiddlesticks!"

"No, sir. Dollars!" exclaimed Fenwick, exasperatingly calm. "Why not accuse me of murdering Captain Dodge, his wife, the second mate, the engineer, and six seamen to start off with? What about your own responsibility? You did n't realize that Captain Dodge was growing old. As long as he could hustle the *Elizabeth* for more trips in a year than any other skipper had crowded out of her, you let him stay where he was. These big vessels are no place for a man that has passed his prime. And, mind you, he carried the fear with him that some day he might be caught and iced up offshore. When the disaster came, his wife was aboard and he loved her. Perhaps these factors did warp his decision. Possibly he surrendered before he was quite whipped. I am not entirely sure of that. He deserves the benefit of the doubt. It was a frightful mess, any way you looked at it.

"I am trying to make you understand, Mr. Rundlett," continued the mate, "how it was that the schooner stayed afloat after we abandoned her. At any rate, Captain Dodge was the commander. It was not for me to dispute him. He ordered us into the boats and we went. It would have been mutiny to do anything else. Was there anything queer about

that? The only queer part of it is that you should assume you can frighten me into chucking up what lawfully belongs to me. I heard you were a bully and I was advised to meet you head on. Here is where we bump, Mr. Runlett, and I am not the one to sheer off."

It was a bump, indeed, which left the owner somewhat breathless. The stark defiance of this youthful mate indicated that his moral fibre was as unyielding as his toughened sinews. Intimidation had failed. In a voice less bellicose the employer argued:—

"It is a collision between us, then, Fenwick, and you are a fool to risk the consequences. I was prepared to do something handsome for you, a present of five hundred dollars, say, and the chance of promotion. You have knocked it galley west with this insane idea of a salvage case that won't hold water. Put yourself in my place. You are a bright fellow. What do I know about you, barring the fact that you are Israel Fenwick's boy? He left you some worthless old schooners and a mortgaged shipyard, and you are fathoms deep in debt, with some fantastic notion of keeping the family property off the rocks. There is a motive. I can't disregard it. Your salvage theory is ingenious. It is a new one on me. But how can you convince me that you ever abandoned the schooner at all? If you did not, she was no derelict and you merely did your duty in sailing her toward the nearest port."

Fenwick smiled at this appeal to reason. Courteously he replied:—

“On the Maine coast it means something to be Israel Fenwick’s son. My word will be as good as yours, and perhaps a little better. You have the reputation of sailing close to the wind on a business proposition, Mr. Runlett.”

“Israel Fenwick’s son? Your brother’s name is Israel Charles, I believe,” was the ugly retort. “Do you call him Charlie because he is such an honor to the family? A loafer and a dead-beat!”

“Dirty tactics! You will feel ashamed of yourself when you cool off,” returned the mate. “I have heard it said of you that you fought hard for dollars, but you fought fair, as a rule. This doesn’t look like it. Well, what is the answer? I am a liar and a swindler — and entitled to no salvage whatever?”

“I am not calling you names, Fenwick. If you can get away with this highly original scheme, you are a wonder. I guess I’d rather go ashore for dinner. Somehow you don’t strike me as a congenial shipmate. I shall come aboard again in an hour or so.”

Left alone, the mate felt fatigued and dispirited. It had been no small thing for him to throw down the gauntlet to a man whose influence and prestige were so conspicuous at home, to risk smashing his career as a sailor, and inflame an enmity which might pursue him ashore. Had there been any disposition to seek a friendly understanding, to make allowance for the

exuberant aspirations of youth, Dudley Fenwick would have been far less jealous of his rights. Salvage is one of those day-dreams, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, which intrigues the fancy of the seafarer. He will some day gain a sudden fortune in this wise, like the whaler and his hope of a lump of ambergris.

Fenwick had been stirred by a kind of boyish zest for the game, an eagerness to play it handsomely in defending his undeniable right and title to salvage, but a man more sympathetic and less overbearing than Amos Runlett might have persuaded him to be satisfied with largess comparatively small. His loyalty toward his ship, his duty to his owner,—this was the line of argument which might have found him responsive; but he was no more to be led by the nose than that massive father of his who had been faithful to his dying shipyard to the very end.

Amos Runlett ate what was miscalled a dinner in an unsavory little restaurant a short distance from the coal-wharves, but instead of returning at once to the Elizabeth Wetherell he picked his way among the railroad tracks, slid down cinder embankments, and skirted the shore until he reached another series of long piers at one of which lay a rusty, disconsolate tramp steamer flying the red ensign. Glancing at her name, Erit Castle, Mr. Runlett climbed aboard and inquired for the captain. He came out of a room on the upper deck, pulling on a shabby blue coat. Lack-

ing a collar and needing a shave, he put one in mind of his steamer. They were two of a kind. Civilly enough he asked: —

“What can I do for you? Come in out of the wind.”

“The lee of the house is warm enough, thank you,” said the forceful visitor. “I happen to be managing owner of the six-master yonder. You met her at sea, so I’m told. Her men were on her, were they?”

The broad-beamed Briton appeared vexed. The recollection was peculiarly unhappy. Hoarsely he exclaimed: —

“The blighters! They were on her when I steamed close enough to hail ‘em.”

“Were they making for the schooner in a boat when you first sighted them, captain?”

“Not accordin’ to the cheeky chap that sung out to me. They were in a boat, all right, but ‘e lawfed and said they had rowed off to set lobster-pots. These were the very words. A-settin’ lobster-pots off soundin’s. Who ever heard the like? Do you fancy the beggar was spoofin’ me?”

“Very likely. He cracks a joke occasionally. He tried to put one over on me just now. Then you concluded that the men were just messing about in the yawl on some errand or other. They had n’t really left the schooner at all? Abandoned her, I mean.”

“They seemed jolly well at home when I did the decent thing and offered to take a hawser.” The accents were bitter as the captain of the hungry Erith’

Castle went on to say, "I was comin' up with the forsaken-looking schooner 'and-over-fist, and it seemed like I might land a bit o' luck. Abandoned? My eye! Did n't I hear 'im say he was in the yawl to set his muckin' lobster-pots? That's all I know and little it is. I thought I was in five or six thousand pounds and 'ere I am, across the Western Ocean in ballast and not a bloody word about a charter."

Amos Runlett expressed regret, but his time was too valuable to be wasted in listening to the sorrows of a down-at-the-heel sea-rover. On his way back to the schooner he reflected that the interview, while not wholly conclusive, had been worth while. The testimony supported his own theory and failed to uphold Fenwick's contention. It was not a theory, to be exact, but a determination to baffle and beat this upstart mate who was crazy enough to think he could get the better of Amos Runlett. No business man worth his salt would meekly surrender twenty-five thousand dollars on the basis of proofs that were full of flaws.

The buckets had begun to scoop the wet coal from the hold and Fenwick found odd jobs to engage his attention. Amos Runlett set about exploring the vessel as thoroughly as possible in order to appraise the damage and investigate for himself the riddle of her survival and the secret of her history during that momentous interval of time between the attack of the nor'easter and the return to Norfolk in tow of

the Undaunted. He poked about uneasily, his annoyance quite apparent. It was as if he expected to find some hidden incrimination which the mate had overlooked. At the end of an hour he curtly announced:—

“I shall have something more to say to-morrow, Fenwick. Have the cook and those four niggers here in the morning. You are in charge of the vessel until relieved. Better think it over. Why don’t you leave the settlement in my hands? This notion of getting rich quick has gone to your head. A good seaman may be a lubber in business matters.”

“What I know about business was learned in a different school, Mr. Runlett. A man never tried to dodge an obligation merely because it shot a hole in his bank account. I am just lubber enough to work my own traverse this time.”

“It may cost you your job and a bad discharge,” almost blithely replied the other. “That would put a stopper on your getting employment in anything but your own cussed old schooners. You and Wesley Amazeen and the rest of the fossils can have lots of fun collecting salvage from each other.”

“Fun to sail with them? Of course. Do you know why?” good-humoredly retorted the mate. “Why, it is fun even to be poor and own three ‘cussed old schooners’ and a stranded shipyard if your word is as good as your bond and you live among the right kind of people who know these things by instinct, Mr. Runlett.”

Like other rebels, once fairly into it Fenwick was beginning to enjoy his insurrection. His colors were nailed to the mast and if he went under it would be with broadsides blazing. Amos Runlett put a hand to the neat, grayish moustache and, without remark, stood gazing at the young man. Irascibility was colored with some feeling more tolerant. At twenty-four, with a grievance large enough, he would have been as fiercely intractable as this Dudley Fenwick. The doctrine of clubbing them under was a sound one in general, but what if they refused to be clubbed?

Captain Joe Dabney had been anxiously waiting for tidings of this interview which he reckoned would be a right spirited skirmish. Artfully he waylaid Mr. Runlett on the wharf and led him by the arm into the private office beyond the big room.

"Promised Fenwick what was comin' to him, of cou'se," carelessly exclaimed the Virginian. "Made the boy happy! He did n't info'm me of the amount of his claim, but I was afraid he'd set it too low. No fear of his tryin' to pull yo' leg, Runlett."

Captain Joe was befittingly serious, but there was merriment in the blue eye and he was not surprised when the man from Portland answered testily:—

"He could have tried no harder to pull it — for twenty-five thousand."

"Very moderate, Runlett. If Terry Cochran had found the *Elizabeth* without a crew aboa'd I should be ashamed to mention such a ridiculous sum as that."

"He will never see a penny of it. His case would be riddled in any court."

"Tut, tut, Runlett! You won't let the boy sue you?"

"He can sue his silly head off. And I am game to spend twenty-five thousand to fight it."

"I infer that you cast reflections on Mr. Fenwick's veracity," smoothly observed Captain Joe. "He has friends who would resent such action on yo' part."

"His friends are a lot of down-east paupers who were fond of his old man. They can't even keep his shipyard going."

"He has friends in Norfolk, Runlett. I don't recall hearin' them referred to as paupers — a most unpleasant term."

"Are *you* butting into this, Dabney? And how far do you intend to go with it? What possessed you to run afoul of me in a fracas that is none of your business whatever?"

"I am the guilty party," smilingly confessed Captain Joe, "and I am prepared to go as far as the show-down. Does this gentle hint percolate through yo' astute intelligence, Mr. Amos Runlett?"

"It speaks poorly for yours, Captain Dabney. There are other tow-boats in Norfolk. They will be glad to get a chance at the Wetherell vessels."

"Dudley Fenwick mentioned that, suh, and it seemed to worry the boy."

"So you had advised him to hold me up! I see now why he crowed so loud."

"A game rooster fights alone, Runlett. My interest in his welfare would n't make a mite of difference to Fenwick if he thought you behaved yo'self like a sho't-card sport. You use my boats because they have the power to swing your big schooners against the tide, not because you are overflowin' with love and charity towards me. No peanut-shell of a tug can take a six-master in and out of Norfolk."

"They can try," roughly exclaimed Runlett, so perplexed that he asked, "Why in the name of common sense are you stirring up this infernal hornet's nest?"

"Once in a while I affo'd myself the luxury of throwin' common sense in the discard and playin' a hunch both ways from the jack. In this instance young Fenwick is the hunch. I will go so far as to say that if he incurs yo' displeasure he need not starve for lack of another berth."

"My private opinion is that your brain has turned to mush," was the candid statement of Amos Runlett. "Please send my mail to the hotel after this. Your office is no place for a man who refuses to discard his common sense."

The inquisition next morning, for which the cook and the four sailors had been summoned, was no more satisfactory. Alfred stood in awe of the man

who loomed so large on his native horizon, but sooner than discredit Mr. Fenwick he would have suffered toasting on his own griddle. Reënforcing him with loquacious gusto were Sidney and Archie who had been paid their wages and took no thought for the morrow. There were other ships and fore-castles when they went broke, and the opportunity of talking back to a "big boss" was a joyous event.

It sounded like a riot, all hands shouting at once, denying, protesting, contradicting, swearing by the mate, sweeping aside all attempts to interrogate them in an orderly manner. A deaf man a cable's-length away would have comprehended that in hinting at a conspiracy Mr. Amos Runlett had touched off a prodigious explosion. He was honestly afraid of assault and battery, for Archie showed the whites of his eyes and the solemn black seaman who looked like a preacher ostentatiously shaved a plug of tobacco with a very long knife until Sidney told him, in loud tones:—

"Put it away, Gus, put it away. Mistuh Runlett is liable to suspect you gwine slice his brisket. You gits worked up mighty easy an' he don't know a-tall what a bad nigger you is."

Fenwick stood aside, highly entertained, until the disgruntled Mr. Runlett ordered him to clear the cabin and bundle these devoted adherents ashore. Apparently judgment was reserved, for the mate was told to put the vessel in dry-dock and then

await further instructions. His employer lingered in Norfolk, consulting with his Portland attorneys by telegraph and also retaining a local expert in maritime law. Fenwick was well enough versed in the rudiments of these same laws to know that he could libel the schooner in the amount of salvage claimed, but he preferred to hope that a decent sense of fair play might inspire an acceptable compromise. An apology would have considerably influenced his mood.

When the calkers, carpenters, and riggers began the task of refitting at Newport News, he felt even more at home than as a first mate. Here was a kind of work, taught him since earliest boyhood by Israel Fenwick, which he was competent to supervise from keel to truck. He jumped into it with a zest which took no account of hours or wages, and Amos Rundlett, shrewd and trenchant, looked on, but made no comment. At the end of a week, however, the owner concluded that his business in Portland was the more important, but he said nothing about sending a new master for the *Elizabeth Wetherell*.

"You know what has to be done, and how to do it," he said to Fenwick. "Be sure to check up all the items before the bills are sent to me. The schooner can't earn enough these days to waste a dollar on her."

"Aye, sir. When she is ready for sea I will notify you and hold her in the stream for orders. Will you come down again to inspect her?"

"Perhaps. Still dreaming of those twenty-five thousand phantom dollars, Fenwick?"

"Certainly. Odd, is n't it, that I am honest enough to be left in charge of this job and too crooked to be trusted at sea?"

"Odd? Well, I said it was queer, and I have n't changed my mind on that score."

"How much longer will you need to thrash it over, Mr. Runlett? What about a decision?"

"It is your first move. I am waiting for you to start something. Supposing we declare a truce while the schooner is being overhauled. That means you hold your berth for the present."

"As long as I can make myself useful to you, sir? I'll agree to that, not because I feel like doing you a good turn, but because I'm fond of the Elizabeth and it will please me to help fit her for service. She has been abused, Mr. Runlett, driven too hard and loaded too deep. A shipbuilder hates to see a fine vessel mishandled."

"You will get ahead, Fenwick, if brass will do the trick," was the dry reply.

"I have nothing to lose by it in this instance, for I am not expecting to sail for you again."

This was their final clash, and Fenwick found himself much happier when left alone. At the end of the week Captain Joe Dabney came down to capture him for Sunday, calling him an ungrateful young renegade who deserved no friends. Ivy

Belle had issued ultimatums and he swore to her to tote the unsociable rascal back dead or alive. There was really no need of compulsion, and while they were sitting in the wheel-house of a tug Captain Joe flourished a newspaper and displayed a head-line which had escaped Fenwick's notice. It was in praise of Captain Terry Cochran who had gone to sea with two barges in tow bound to Charleston. During a night of thick and stormy weather he had sighted the distress signals of a navy supply ship which was aground on a shoal and breaking up.

After finding an anchorage for his barges, he had undertaken to save the hundred and thirty men in the steamer. One boat after another was swamped or smashed, but the Undaunted persevered until every soul was taken off, some of them injured and helpless. Captain Cochran had behaved with magnificent skill and courage, so the account ran, and would undoubtedly receive the formal thanks of the Navy Department.

Fenwick read the story of the feat and perceived that the eulogy was not exaggerated. He said as much to Captain Joe, who seemed proud of his own acumen as he replied:—

“What did I tell you about that boy? Yo' aces looked good, but he was just naturally bound to fill his hand. The unfo'tunate crews of those barges of his were hangin' on by their toe-nails within an inch and a half of hell when he picked 'em up again.



CAPTAIN JOE DABNEY CAME DOWN TO CAPTURE HIM
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seas were breakin' clean over their decks, but did Terry care? Not that human sky-rocket was too busy getting his name in the papers and in' seamanship to the United States Navy." "That's not quite fair to him, is it?" demurred ey.

"O' criticism is just," agreed Captain Joe. "I ct the imputation. What I mean to say is that has many virtues, but the shy and shrinking ty of the well-known violet is not included. due in port to-night and I'll ask him out for ay."

Fenwick's second visit beneath this friendly roof him much to think about. Ivy Belle was win- ly, consistently cordial and refrained from g him. She was fascinating, and perhaps his beat a trifle faster when she was near, but his mment was not blinded and he could not bring self to feel that he genuinely interested her. manner assiduously conveyed the impression he was the one man in the world. This did not to displease Captain Dabney, and Fenwick ively surmised that such was Ivy Belle's in- on, to win her father's approbation for some n as yet undisclosed. There were cross-cur- beneath the placid surface. It was Dudley's itance from his gentle mother, a sensitive re- e to influences subtle and intangible. try Cochran's arrival was thoroughly in char-

acter. His head was decorated with a bandage and one arm was carried in a sling. He made his entrance, to be accurate, looking the part of a hero. He disappointed his audience, however, by avoiding all boasting or bravado and referred to his exploit as if it had merely broken the monotony of a routine voyage. A rough-and-tumble job, said he, the Undaunted almost rolling her stack under, a night as black as your hat, shoal water to make the seas worse, and a crazy business generally, what with fishing men out of broken and upset boats and an ungodly mob of them — standing-room only and the last dozen or so you had to ram in anyhow.

"It would have made you laugh, Cap'n Joe," cried Terry in his bright eager way. "Navy officers and enlisted men properly mixed up for once, and the fat commander pulled out of the wet by one leg, and his trousers ripped off him, at that. I gave him a big drink and rolled him into my own bunk and we were two jolly old pals when he came to."

"But what busted you up, boy? How came you to be all tied up like a warrior bold?"

"I had to go overboard to grab a couple of these lads as they floated past and 't was the tow-boat that flew up and hit me when I was on the return trip in the bight of a heavin'-line. Just a crack on the top end of me and a broken wrist or something. The doctor man in Charleston repaired me when I

landed my passengers. Which reminds me, Mr. Fenwick. How is the health of that invalid windjammer of yours, the Elizabeth Wetherell, long life and better luck to her?"

"She will be ready to buck another nor'easter soon, thank you," replied the mate.

"And the lord high admiral of the fleet has gone back to Portland, so I'm told. I wish I could have been in the front row when you were having words with him. 'T is a safe guess that you gave him as good as he sent."

"We disagreed and adjourned for another session."

"And you did not go to the mat with him? I am afraid you have lost your punch. 'T is the enervating climate, most likely."

"Mr. Fenwick controls his temper," reproved Ivy Belle. "I am sure he never fought with policemen."

"But I simply had to whip the three of them," righteously protested Terry. "They were for abducting my chief engineer in the patrol wagon because he was drunk, and how could I sail at daylight without the man? Can I never live it down?"

"But you totally ruined a sailors' boarding-house only three months ago, Captain Terry Cochran — promenaded through it with a piece of the stair-rail in your hand, I believe."

"The pirate had robbed two of my stokers and was holding them to extort more money, as you very well

know, Miss Dabney. Would you have me desert my own niggers? Shame on you for your spiteful treatment of a friend whose heart beats true, for all his faults. The inhumanity of woman makes countless thousands mourn, says the poet."

Captain Joe seemed to regard this quarrel as nothing unusual and permitted it to run its course while he talked and strolled with Dudley Fenwick. More or less, for the rest of the day, they were paired off in this manner. It was not accidental, but part of an interplay of motives and purposes which Fenwick began to comprehend in illusive glimpses. He discovered that Captain Dabney's liking for him was much more than the passing fancy of an impulsive man. There had been a beloved son, dead in his youth, and some strong resemblance, outward or of heart and mind, had suggested itself to the father. It was enough to win his affection, and perhaps Fenwick was the sort of man he had hoped the vanished son might be. Aside from this, he more and more admired and respected the young New Englander's working rule of life, so sound and simple in its unswerving allegiance to duty. There were no complexities of character to befog one's judgments of him.

In offering to stand behind the case against Amos Runlett, Captain Joe had meant what he said. He was careful to explain to Fenwick that it was not so rashly chivalrous as appeared. The loss of the

Wetherell business would be no disaster to an income largely received from investments ashore. He was naturally lazy, Captain Dabney said of himself, and he had to keep too dashed wide awake to deal with a man like Runlett who hollered for vouchers and receipts and itemized statements like a razor-back shote in a corn-crib. He had dreams of retiring to play the sportsman and country gentleman before he was too confounded old to enjoy himself. He had no idea of selling his boats, however, and winding up the Virginia Towing and Transportation Company. It was his own creation, built up from one small wooden tug and a couple of old lighters, and a source of family pride, like Fenwick's shipyard.

It was to be pieced together, a hint here, an inference there, the whole trend of his rambling confidences, that he had hoped to train Terry Cochran to take hold in the office, but was now convinced that the youngster needed all outdoors for his surging activities. And Dudley Fenwick was very like the pattern of the man who could be relied on to master and manage the maritime interests of Captain Joseph Dabney. In his ingenuous fashion, as though thinking aloud, he several times mentioned how pleasantly Ivy Belle had been impressed. There had been some nonsense between Terry Cochran and her, but nothing serious. That would never do. The Lord never intended Terry to be a marrying man. And Ivy Belle required a more steady influence. Not

an ounce of harm in the child, but her mother had raised her in idleness — old-fashioned notions about a lady being purely ornamental and so on.

Fenwick listened and otherwise observed. He was neither blind nor stupid and there was a deal more than nonsense between Ivy Belle and young Captain Cochran. Terry was in love with her, that was perfectly obvious, and was manfully endeavoring so to conduct himself as to make Captain Joe esteem him more highly. This was why he had modestly said so little about his brilliant adventure at sea. It was all for Ivy Belle, as Fenwick fathomed it.

Were her own feelings adroitly masked? It seemed plausible to think so. She might expect Fenwick to flirt with her, to play the diverting cavalier, but was not the real intent to use him in order to hide the truth from her doting father? There was a tension, a constraint. The girl was on her guard, her every glance for the openly adoring Terry who had nothing to conceal. Her gaiety was a trifle forced, and a restless impatience could not be dissembled.

Fenwick called himself a fool for such guesswork as this, but nevertheless it served to sway his own decision and to influence his immediate destiny. If Amos Runlett had shown signs of relenting, it was not because he stood in any fear of the mate of the Elizabeth Wetherell. It was the shadow of his Captain Joe Dabney in the background, his money and his power, and without him Fenwick felt certain that

his was a losing fight. There was the temptation to forsake the old shipyard in Spring Haven, the bleak prospect of mending his broken affairs, the hard existence of the coastwise trade in sailing craft, and to start afresh among a kindlier folk and with fairer auspices. He was convinced that Captain Joe Dabney's daughter had no intention of marrying him, but if her father held this idea, then even to accept his aid and influence in the matter of Amos Runlett was to play a game of false pretences.

It seemed far-fetched, in a way, but Fenwick was troubled, hoping to end his visit before he should become any more deeply involved in the fond efforts of Captain Joe to shape his future for him.

"If Runlett turns you loose when you finish the work at Newport News, what is yo' programme?" inquired the father of Ivy Belle.

"Go home to look things over, and if the yard can't support me, look for another schooner."

"You will consider a proposition from me, I trust, Dudley, before you tie up somewhere else?"

"It may sound ungrateful, sir, but I must not think of shifting my moorings. I belong down east and it's win or lose in the old port where the other Fenwicks lived their lives and did their best."

"But capital might be found to protect yo' family interests until the shipyard is able to take care of itself again, Dudley. Permit me to emphasize another argument. If you associate yo'self with me, we

can handle this salvage affair together and blow Amos Runlett clean out of water. He was behavin' gun-shy before he went No'th."

"He was afraid of you," said Fenwick. "Yes, I saw that. All my fine talk could n't make a dent in him. But I shall have to go it alone and take my medicine if he whips me."

"I reckon I was just as independent and asinine at your age," sighed the thwarted benefactor. "Young men have been known to change their minds, so we'll drop it for to-day and referee some of this squabblin' between Ivy Belle and the illustrious Terry Cochran who eats 'em alive."

Fenwick suspected that the capricious daughter of the house of Dabney was affecting to continue the quarrel by way of deceiving her parent. Certainly Terry was far from resenting it and seemed most reluctant to return to Norfolk in the late afternoon and let a surgeon examine his injured wrist. Fenwick was anxious to motor to town at the same time, but it was difficult to withstand the plea to remain until the evening. This offered an opportunity to be alone with Ivy Belle, who said with a happy little laugh:—

"It is some stunt to steal you away from dad for a while. I wonder if he realizes how selfish he has been all day. I shall certainly have to tell him so. But you did n't look so very miserable."

"I was n't very happy," he admitted, with a twinkle,

"but I wonder how much you really mourned my absence."

"Oh, frightfully! My heart was simply crushed," she avowed. "I took it out on poor Terry. I was horrid to him."

"And you would have been nicer to me, Miss Dabney?"

"Ever so much. Why, I have been counting the days and hours to Sunday. Have n't you?"

"Heavens, yes. You noticed my sad, yearning gaze, of course."

"At dinner, you mean? I thought you must be hungry. Beware how you trifle with a trustin' village girl's feelings, Mr. Dudley Fenwick. Do you think I am beautiful?"

"Very. There are few in your class — only one so far as I know."

"What's that? Listen to the man! You dare compare me with another girl? Ah, I see. You would drive me mad with jealousy. And I treated Terry so shamefully because I was careful of *your* feelings."

The sailor was enjoying the game and fancied that Ivy Belle might play it with wary skill, but he also felt anxious to be a friend in need. There was whimsical tenderness in his voice as he said: —

"Supposing I fell oceans deep in love with you at first sight. What then?"

"But you did, did n't you? I believed so, or how

could I be so — er — so bold — unmaidenly is the word used in polite circles?"

"Then you love me as I love you?" demanded the amazing Fenwick.

"Do you doubt me?" said Ivy Belle. "And my dear father will tumble all over himself to give his consent."

"Would you marry a man without it?" — and the accents were severe.

"Gracious! Is this the New England conscience?" she cried.

"One of the symptoms," he replied. "Well, I have sparred for an opening and now for an honest, so-help-me talk between us. You have not fooled me for one minute to-day, although you are clever at it. Terry Cochran is your choice, the man of your heart, and what worries you more than anything else is that Captain Joe may find it out. And you also think I am liable to interfere. It is an awkward topic for me to handle, — uncalled-for, perhaps, — but I will make a clumsy attempt at it. If your father has any notion of encouraging me, — if he hopes I may win your favor, — well, Miss Ivy Belle, it will complicate your problem considerably."

"He has made up his mind, — I can just sense it already, that you are to be my c-compulsory husband," woefully faltered Ivy Belle, "and I c-could n't disobey him, for he is such a perfect old duck of a dad."

"There, now we are talking on the level," cried

Fenwick, with an air of relief. "The sooner I beat for the open sea, the better for all hands. I want you to know that I told Captain Joe to-day that I must go my own gait. I am absolutely the least of your worries. My advice is to be patient and hold steady. There is splendid stuff in Terry Cochran and he worships you. You will never let him run wild. He is trying to be the kind of man your father will approve of. God bless you, my children, and don't elope or anything like that."

"And you are only twenty-four years old, Dudley Fenwick," said Ivy Belle, in reverent tones. "As wise as an owl and as dignified as a presiding elder. It is awfully sweet of you and *so* unworldly. You would come into a pot of money if you married me. And if I stood no show of getting Terry, you would be my second choice."

"A compliment I shall never forget, Miss Ivy Belle," — and he was at least half in earnest. "You would be my own second choice if you had n't a blessed cent."

"Your self-sacrifice would be more romantic if I were the only one," she replied, with a shade of regret. "The proper thing is for you to wreck your life for the sake of my happiness. As it is, you are giving me up when you have n't got me, and you are not in the least broken-hearted about it. But I think I understand. I wish Terry Cochran understood. He is terribly low in his mind."

"Perhaps I can see him again before I go."

The interview was not long delayed, for Terry fretted in a hotel room, by order of the surgeon, while the mate of the *Undaunted* took her down the harbor. As soon as he was released, he boarded the ferry to Newport News and appeared on the deck of the *Elizabeth Wetherell*, jaunty, coolly polite. Fenwick invited him into the cabin and they gossiped of ships and the sea for some time.

"This is all leeway and no getting ahead at all," gustily exclaimed Captain Cochran. "'T is our fortune to mix up afloat and ashore, and we are both obstinate men, but there is no bad blood between us so far."

"Nor will there be, if I can help it, Terry," declared the other.

"You have made yourself wonderfully popular in a certain home, Dudley, and for quick action I never saw the like. It happens that way now and again. People meet and hit it off in tune as if they had known each other all their lives. Others, like myself, jangle the music, no matter how hard they try to learn it. And you are making it worse than ever for me. As man to man, what do you mean to do?"

"You have n't seen a certain girl since Sunday, then?"

"Divil a chance. The old man asks me down only once in so often, which is seldom."

"Then what do you say to asking her for information? If you are in too much of a hurry, I am ready to declare myself right now. Just as soon as I can get clear of Norfolk I intend to go back to find a girl in Maine and work and hope and wait for her. I met her only once, but she is pulling at the end of my tow-rope."

"A sudden man, as I was saying," cried Terry, his face aglow, "and yet they will have it that impulsiveness is my own worst fault. You can sail rings around me. I thank you, Dudley, and wish you luck. 'T will please you to hear, no doubt, that you have set a pattern for me. It has been shown me what kind of a man is salubrious to Cap'n Joe Dabney."

"He will find out for himself some day that you are a better, abler man than I," returned Fenwick. "If you are in Boston or Portland with barges, promise to let me know, won't you?"

"I will send up rockets without fail."

In this suave fashion did the tempestuous Terry confirm his new reputation for law and order and uphold his doctrine of man to man. On this same day Alfred, the cook, came to the schooner and announced that as long as Mr. Fenwick was living at a hotel in Newport News and there was no crew aboard the vessel, he might as well go home to Maine on furlough. He had squandered his savings in sight-seeing tours to Richmond and Baltimore,

enjoying the most prodigal vacation of his career, and would now "hole in" at Machiasport until summoned to rejoin the schooner.

On the preceding Sunday, it seemed, the spirit had moved him to hire an automobile and grandly disport himself in the direction of Cape Henry. Not wholly by accident did he pass the estate of Captain Joseph Dabney nor did he fail to note the guests who chanced to be out-of-doors. Approaching the topic in a manner innocently guarded, he observed: —

"A pity you missed speakin' me in the offing, Mr. Fenwick. I was a large, expensive spectacle, lemme tell you, off on a high-lonesome. Had a real pleasant Sunday, did you? I guess I ought to step in and say good-bye to Cap'n Joe. Him and his daughter treated me real clever. Money comes in handy, I'm free to confess, and some folks deserve all they can get of it, provided their treasure is where their heart is also."

"Captain Dabney has an excellent opinion of you, Alfred." And Fenwick added, in some anxiety, "Going straight home, are you?"

"Well, there's cousins once removed in Spring Haven that I ain't seen in quite a spell, and I may as well stop over."

The mate winced at this, for he preferred to carry his own tidings, and wished he might lock the cook in his galley. That babbling tongue of his

was more to be dreaded than a shipwreck. There was no help for it, however, and Fenwick piously regretted that those cousins were not several hundred miles removed from Spring Haven. With the best of intentions one cook was enough to spoil the broth.

CHAPTER VII

A SEA-COOK SPOILS THE BROTH

GLEAMING spars of Oregon pine, white sails strong and new, the Elizabeth Wetherell was at length dismissed by the men who toiled to heal her hurts and given into the keeping of the sea again. To Dudley Fenwick, as to his father before him, a ship was more than a lifeless structure of timbers and planks and cordage. This puissant six-master, so lofty and austere, possessed a conscious entity which he had learned to know and to control. It saddened him to think of parting from her and he daily expected the message which should compel him to seek employment elsewhere. No officer who had refused to knuckle under could sail for Amos Runlett. When the telegram came, however, it took him all aback and he read it several times with a sense of astonishment.

Vessel chartered from Sewall's Point to Portland. Load immediately. Bring her up yourself. Am sending two mates.

Fenwick smoked his pipe and pondered, trying to put his finger on the motive for this extraordinary expression of confidence. For a voyage, at least, he was entrusted with the command of the schooner and his heart sang with boyish elation. Solemn was his visage, though, and there was no

Captain Joe Dabney to act as a right bower in time of doubt and stress. The stubborn young man had elected to go his own gait. That he had gained quick promotion on his merits seemed out of the question. Perhaps Amos Runlett had been unable to find, at short notice, a master qualified to handle one of the big schooners and was unwilling to risk delay and loss. Another theory which Fenwick propounded to himself ran something like this:—

“His game is to keep me guessing. I will be quiet about the salvage as long as he can fool me with hopes of a command in the *Elizabeth*. Make me a permanent skipper of her? He never dreamed of it.”

His comrades tried and true came at the call, Alfred and the four niggers, all of them poor and needy and absorbed in thoughts of salvage. Realizing that Mr. Fenwick had encountered obstacles, they avoided reference to the late distressful voyage, although Archie chanted in a minor key his desire for “a leetle mo’ coal, jes’ a leetle mo’ coal.” Fenwick grinned at this, but when the hatches were closed the *Elizabeth* was not as deeply laden as when Captain William Dodge had last taken her out.

It was fitting that the *Undaunted* should tow her out past the Capes. The day was fair with a favoring wind. Terry Cochran had guests aboard, Captain Joe Dabney and Ivy Belle, who had come to bid the schooner good-bye and fare you well.

When the hawser slackened and the deck-hands cast it free, the tug drifted alongside the schooner and the girl's sweet, lazy voice called out: —

“Come back again, Captain Dudley Fenwick, and remember what I said about a second choice.”

Her jovial father pulled his hat over his eyes and was quieter than usual. Certain hopes had been dispelled, generous ambitions were come to naught, but it made no difference in his regard for the down-east sailor, and heartily sincere was the adieu.

“Any time, anywheres, my boy, if I can bear a hand, just you let out one holler and I'll sho'ly come a-runnin'.”

The deep-toned whistle of the Undaunted blew three long blasts. It was Terry Cochran's robust message which was answered by the roar of the steam whistle upon the schooner's forecastle-head. To Fenwick it seemed to mean that they had met and parted as man to man, with no aftermath of hatred or regret. He waved his cap, looked again as the tug dropped astern, and then turned to urge his ship on the homeward-bound track.

For the time the Elizabeth was his sweetheart. His devotion was single-minded, absolute. Instinctively he assumed the solitary dignity of his station which the two mates accepted with ready deference. Both were older men than he — faithful, drudging seamen of the Maine breed who lacked the qualities of command. They had never studied

navigation as a science, the sextant and chronometer were mysteries, but by means of a sounding lead and guesswork they could have fetched any coastwise port and hit close to the mark.

Before nightfall the luckiest wind that Fenwick had ever known came rushing to show him what the *Elizabeth* could do for a record passage. It drove her foaming through a welter of shouting seas, with a friendly impetuosity that tested the brand-new sails and gear to the utmost, but was not strong enough to make her reef or lower. Glorious winter weather, sunshine and starlight, and the log clicking off fourteen knots for hours on end!

Fenwick forgot to sleep and never missed it. The wind blew his cares away. His mighty vessel, buoyant, resurgent, overtook and passed one steamer after another and swept beyond their horizon like a cloud. Three days out from the Capes she was towed in by Portland Head, a broom lashed to the gilded ball at the tip of her spanker topmast. A new mark had been set for the Wetherell fleet and the *Elizabeth* was queen of them all.

There was room at the coal-wharf and no waiting to discharge. Dudley Fenwick, ready to jump ashore and report at the office, could not help believing that this slant of good fortune was an omen of success, a turn of the tide. All he had done was to let the wind blow him home, but such a passage was bound to give him prestige. In this happy

humor he was leaving the ship when a listless figure of a man, resembling him in a blurred, weakened way, climbed from the wharf and halted as if uncertain of his reception. Dudley's high spirits were instantly damped. The omens had changed for the worse. This slack-twisted brother of his would never come down to meet him out of pure affection.

Israel Charles Fenwick advanced, hesitated again, and then offered a nerveless hand as he said: —

“Hello, Dud, old sport! Welcome to our hamlet. I happened to be in Front Street when you hauled in just now. Some surprise for the salt-water guys, eh? They were n't looking for you inside a week.”

The younger brother recalled the last interview, the attitude of cheap defiance after their father's funeral. Instead of this, Charlie's attitude was somehow cringing and furtive beneath an attempted nonchalance. With a sense of foreboding Dudley replied: —

“I did n't loaf on the trip from Norfolk. Anything particular you wish to see me about? I have the ship's business to attend to — later in the day I shall be at leisure —”

“I guess you'd better take a few minutes to listen to me,” doggedly exclaimed Israel Charles, slouching in the direction of the cabin. “This is one of our gay little family reunions. You always enjoy 'em.”

Dudley followed in dour silence, sorry for the

forlorn fellow, yet intensely annoyed. Too bad that Charlie should have this luckless faculty of rubbing him the wrong way, that it should be so difficult to make allowance for him. He had led a gray, shabby, discontented existence, never quite disreputable, but close to the edge. When the wastrel entered the cabin he was careful to close the door, with a quick glance at the mate's room to be sure it was empty. Dudley rammed his hands in his pockets, leaned against a wall, and tried to do the decent thing by asking:—

“How goes the world with you, Charlie? Your wife is well, I hope. Still working in the shoe-store, are you?”

The family failure put a hand to his chest and coughed. He was thinner, more sallow than when his brother had last seen him.

“I doped it as a bad cold for a while, Dud, but I should n't wonder if it was a bum lung. Ethel? Oh, there's nothing the matter with her except a lovely temper that has n't improved since you turned us out of the house at Spring Haven. What was the use? I was licked before I started. I always am.”

“I told you the truth, Charlie. There was no estate to fight over.”

“I took your word for it, did n't I? Anyhow, I told the lawyer to drop it. Maybe I was easy, at that. What about now? I'm not begging for a hand-out even if I did have to quit the shoe-store. I

could n't stand the bad air and long hours. Look at you — in right with Amos Runlett — a fortune in salvage — and master of one of his finest vessels. And I'm wise to more than that. The tip is out that you've framed it to marry a Norfolk girl with all kinds of dough."

"And you came to congratulate me, Charlie? The only trouble with your news is that I am not sure of getting a penny of salvage, I am not the master of the Elizabeth, and the only girl I know in Norfolk expects to marry another man."

"You say it well," was the snarling comment. "It sounds as smooth as that other story you put across. Too bad about you."

"If you are sick and out of a job, wait until I settle my accounts and I'll divide my wages with you, Charlie. I told you as much."

"I drew in advance," was the singular reply. "It was inside information, understand? A customer passed it to me on the quiet, one day in the store. He is a broker — big New York house with a Portland branch. It looked like a cinch."

Charlie coughed and wetted his lips with his tongue. Dudley stared at him with a puzzled scowl and demanded: —

"You drew *what* in advance?"

"Wait a minute. I had to get quick action. I stood to win two or three thousand dollars, Dud. That may not sound so awful big to you, but try and think

what it meant to me. I was going to pull my freight, go South, and get strong or something like that — shut up my wife's infernal cackle about poverty. You had the coin. I don't care what you said. There was something tucked away, and I hear it all over Spring Haven that you have been cleaning up a barrel of money. Your cook spilled the news. A little of it belonged to me, and I took a piece."

"How could you manage to find any money of mine, Charlie?" was the mystified interrogation. "All I had was what I left in the bank at home to help out the yard. I gave the foreman, John Moon, a power of attorney to draw it as needed for wages or material."

"I made out a check, to your order, and signed it with your name," confessed the wretched culprit. "Your signature was dead easy for me. Nothing to it. The bank never blinked at it. I had to sting you for eight hundred dollars. I thought if you beefed about it I could square matters out of my profits on the deal with the broker. It belonged to me, I tell you, and it was my chance of a lifetime to cop off a stake."

"You forged my name for eight hundred dollars?" incredulously exclaimed Dudley. "And are you ready to pay it back?"

"Hardly. The broker's inside stuff went wrong. It was a flurry in lard and the big operators greased the skids for us pikers and pushed us off. My luck, of course. You could n't beat it. Forgery, Dud?"

Guess again. It was using my own money without your consent."

"And you were n't afraid I would throw you in jail?" said the younger brother, musingly like a man whose mind was benumbed.

"Certainly not. You would n't spatter mud all over the name of Israel Fenwick for eight hundred dollars, not even for the fun of seeing me jugged for a couple of years. You will fix things so I can't trim you again, but you can't afford to squeal. Israel Fenwick on the list of grand jury indictments? It would n't do, Dud. Better forget it. You won't even miss the eight hundred, and I had to have it."

All the sailor brother's happy pride and self-confidence had turned to ashes. His sense of justice, of giving the devil his due, enabled him to comprehend that the worthless Israel Charles would not have become a criminal unless he were still possessed by the delusion that he had been defrauded of his patrimony. This was a motive, not an extenuation, and it made the deed no less base and treacherous. As one who wrestled with a problem which eluded him, Dudley Fenwick sighed and said, without anger:—

"I wish I knew how to handle you, Charlie. Perhaps I have been too hard. There is a responsibility, I suppose, for you can't take care of yourself. Father cut you adrift and I naturally took the same course with you. No, I can't put his son in jail. You did n't steal from me. You robbed him, took money that

belonged to his shipyard, all the cash it had. That is what hurts worst."

"Close the yard, then, and good riddance," callously replied Israel Charles. "Quit pouring good money into a rat-hole, and you won't have to whine to me about being hard up."

"I can't talk to you now. Go to a doctor to-day and tell him to make a survey of your lungs. If he condemns you as consumptive, I will see what can be done for you. Let him send the bill to me."

"Coals of fire on the old bean, Dud?" said the prodigal son, not altogether in mockery. "If you were n't so all-fired superior and virtuous, I might come pretty near liking you."

"Well, I seem to have inherited you, Charlie, along with the other family burdens. Forging checks! You ought to hate yourself a good deal more than I can ever hate you for it. Hate you? No, it is something else. Discouragement, I guess. A man can lug just about so much on his back before he begins to sag."

Israel Charles wandered ashore alone, glancing over his shoulder as if fearing that his brother might assist him with the toe of a boot. Presently Dudley followed to walk with lagging step in the direction of the dingy brick front where Amos Runlett ruled as manager of the fleet. It might be a vital interview and Fenwick had been in the proper mood for it until this miserable episode depressed him like a sudden illness. He felt it like the stigma of a personal dis-

grace. The loss of the money was a lesser affliction, and yet it loomed as a disaster which fettered his spirit of independence and impaired his fine courage.

In this he was no worse than many another brave man whose self-assurance is apt to rise and fall with his bank account. Penury inspires more fear than deadly weapons. Dudley Fenwick's savings had been the anchor to windward which he hoped might enable the shipyard to ride safely through; a slender anchor and a tenuous hope, but it was the best he could do. His thoughts were in Spring Haven when he entered Amos Runlett's office. There was no waiting for an audience this time. His dapper employer dropped all other business, summoned him inside the railing, and gripped his hand as he cried: —

“Congratulations, Fenwick! Your picture will be in the papers to-morrow. And you abused me for letting Captain Dodge drive the old hooker too hard! Did she come up to breathe between here and the Capes?”

“Now and then, sir. There never was such a gorgeous breeze of wind. All I did was coax her and she came through without starting a rope-yarn.”

“Not as much coal as usual, I notice.”

“I got home with it. I would have refused to bring her back unless she was loaded to my own draft.”

“Come, Fenwick, none of that high-handed nonsense. We finished with it at Norfolk.”

The young man accepted the rebuke with un-

wonted meekness. His brown cheek reddened, and he sat twisting his hat in his hands like a tamed, subservient Wetherell skipper. Amos Runlett perceived the changed attitude and concluded that Fenwick was learning common sense. With the air of one conferring a boon, the autocrat exclaimed:—

“I think a lot better of you. All you seemed good for was to keep your blessed jaw-tackle going.”

“Will you look over my accounts and pay me off, Mr. Runlett?”

“Pay you off? Certainly. Seventy dollars a month. You are on the articles as mate of the vessel. You will want to run home to Spring Haven, I presume. This is Tuesday. Come back Thursday morning and be ready to sail in the afternoon. Unless I get a charter-party in the meantime, it will be Hampton Roads for orders.”

Fenwick was startled out of his half-hearted, sullen indifference. Jumping to his feet, he demanded:—

“Do I go as mate or master?”

“I have said nothing about another master, have I? It may be temporary. I don’t know about that. The proposition is a hundred and fifty a month wages.”

“Instead of primage? Such an offer may look tempting to a man of my age, Mr. Runlett, but you drive a hard bargain. It will cost more than that to buy me off.”

“Oh, that salvage proposition of yours, Fenwick?”

was the careless query, but the employer was alertly on the defensive. "Is n't it reward enough to be taking the *Elizabeth* to sea?"

"Not unless I own in her and receive my five per cent of the freight, like every other skipper of the fleet."

"Um-m, you'd be mighty thankful for the berth if Joe Dabney had n't filled you up with fool notions," said Runlett, with a weary shrug. "I can fight him to a finish, but it means trouble and expense for lawyers, and he is wrong-headed enough to spend a fortune to make it hot for me. You say you want to own in the vessel. All right. Now listen. I'll scrap it through till hades freezes over before I pay you anything like the sum in cash you tried to stick me up for. In fact, there is nothing doing on a cash basis, understand, Fenwick. I admit no legal claim against the schooner. But I am willing to let you own in her, twenty thousand dollars worth, a fifth of her according to your own valuation. This vessel happens to belong to me and the Wetherell estate, all but a few scattered sixty-fourths. Call it a compromise, or whatever you please. It's my last word, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"You would n't submit such an offer if you honestly believed I had not earned salvage," slowly answered Fenwick, who was greatly surprised. "Yes, we can get together on that. I'd much rather have the money, but it makes me sick to think of begin-

ning a squabble for it which may drag along in the courts for years. What about the men who helped me save the schooner? Where do they come in?"

"That is your lookout. Expect me to pension 'em for life after paying you twenty thousand for the job?"

"Probably not. It is up to me to do the square thing somehow. One more argument, Mr. Runlett. If the *Elizabeth* is laid up without a charter, for weeks or months, my investment earns me nothing and my only income is forty a month nominal wages."

"Owner's profits — owner's risks," crisply observed Mr. Runlett, and his grin was unfeeling.

"This fifth interest is to be clear of all assessments, sir, including the recent repair bills for the *Elizabeth*?"

"Yes, you young Shylock. If I don't look sharp, you will snatch the whole fleet away from me."

Fenwick thanked him for the dubious compliment and should have been, by rights, extremely well satisfied. He was ill at ease, however, more troubled than when he had walked into the office. His conscience told him that the transaction was not quite in accord with a fastidious sense of honor, that it was a little soiled by a deception which might be fair enough between business men, but which seemed intolerable to a simple-minded sailor. He had endeavored to obtain what he sincerely held to be his, but now he became aware that money and the desire

of it could corrode the soul like an acid touching metal. Old "Pinch-Penny" Dodge turned miser and his splendid seamanship marred thereby! Amos Runlett, rich and trying to grow richer because it was the only game he loved to play, dodging and twisting to evade a just obligation! Israel Charles Fenwick, a Judas to his own brother, selling himself without shame!

These images insistently presented themselves to Dudley Fenwick while he delayed in the office to have the ship's accounts approved. A man was in peril if he swerved from the path by so much as a hair's breadth. He had almost slipped in permitting Amos Runlett to misunderstand, but it was not too late to explain. His resolute bearing had returned as he crossed the floor and stood at the desk to say:—

"You took it for granted just now, Mr. Runlett, that Captain Joe Dabney stood behind me with his money and his influence. Was that why you hauled down your colors and agreed to compromise for twenty thousand dollars worth of vessel shares?"

"What's that? Up in the air again?" was the sputtering answer. "I thought I had you disposed of. Why, of course, I decided it was n't worth my like to buck a crazy sundowner like Dabney."

"He dropped out of it before I left Norfolk, sir. You ought to know that. It does n't seem exactly on the level to me to bluff you out of the interest in

the vessel. Perhaps I can't make it clear, but it reminds me of dealing a hand of marked cards."

"Well, I will be scuppered!" violently announced Amos Runlett. "If you could learn to keep your mouth shut, you might be a successful man. What kind of a hole does this leave me in? If I withdraw this agreement with you, it is because Joe Dabney scared me into making it. That is the only inference and it is as disagreeable as the devil."

"Why not forget Captain Joe and say you will stand by your word because it is the decent thing to do?"

"I guess there is no way out for me," grumbled the owner. "I might have never found out that Dabney threw you over, Fenwick. I ought to get mad, cancel the deal, and take the schooner away from you. Why don't I? Perhaps because it's so seldom I find a man so cussed honest that it hurts him."

"Then it is clear sailing between us, Mr. Runlett, and here's hoping for better than seventy cents a ton next trip. Owner's profits sound good to me."

CHAPTER VIII

THE GIRL IN THE CRIMSON SWEATER

SPRING HAVEN lay deep in snow, and the river was ice-bound to the edges of the channel in which the floes jostled to and fro with the thrust of a swirling tide. Dudley Fenwick followed the street which dipped down the hillside and skirted the row of wharves with their dilapidated sheds. As melancholy as the decrepitude of old age are the relics of a seaport which has seen its traffic depart. This was home, however, and dear to the young man's eyes which were eager for the first glimpse of the square house at the gate of the Fenwick yard. Above the intervening roofs he saw the topmasts of one small schooner which he hoped might have come in for repairs.

Turning into the lane that led from the street, he halted and feared that bad news awaited him. The lone three-master was recognized as Captain Elmer Gallant's *Mary Fenwick* which was tied up at the bulkhead. There were no signs of life on board, no smoke from cabin or galley stovepipe, and two of the booms were naked of canvas. The venerable coaster appeared to be stripped and laid up for the winter. The shipyard itself was no more animated. The marine railway was empty, the shops closed, the men gone.

Dudley did not pass inside the gate, but went into his father's house to find a welcome not so cheerless. Aunt Mary Fenwick had seen him from a window where she hovered in a flutter of fond impatience. She wore her best black gown with the treasured bit of lace at the neck. It was unseemly to display one's feelings and so her thin lips were tightly compressed and she pretended to be knitting. Her nephew swept in like a gale of wind, lifted her clear of the floor, kissed her wrinkled cheek, plumped down in a rocking-chair, and exclaimed:—

“Thank the Lord the house is still open and I have you to come back to. A sailor's snug harbor if ever there was one! Did you give me up for lost on that voyage with Captain Dodge? You can't drown a Fenwick.”

“It must be so, Dudley, after what you did and suffered,” she replied, sitting primly erect with folded hands. “The last time you came I broke a tea-cup which was an unlucky sign and, lo and behold, you could have been no nearer to going to the bottom in that Wetherell vessel and lived to tell the tale.”

“Unlucky? Not a bit of it. Amos Runlett has made me master of the Elizabeth, and I am to own a fifth of her,” he announced.

“You don't say so, Dudley; all that done for you by that raggedy little Runlett boy,” cried Aunt Mary whose memory nimbly leaped the gap of

years. "It is no more'n you deserve, but if your father was alive he'd tell you to watch Amos Runlett like a hen does a hawk. He has been coming to Spring Haven oftener than usual since he gave all that money to the library and was elected trustee. You know how folks will talk, Dudley. Amos is a widower, well preserved and lively as a cricket, with his natty clothes and a flower in his button-hole. They do say he is devotin' himself to the library because Kate Eldredge went there to work, her that is Cap'n Elmer Gallant's niece from Rockland. Mercy, there must be twenty-five years' difference between 'em, but there's a dangerous age for some men when they're neither hay nor grass. She is a handsome, sensible girl, and you can't tell me she is fool enough to marry Amos Runlett for his money. Did n't you meet her once, after Israel died?"

Poor Dudley's face wore an expression of pained attention, a blend of the martyr and the stoic. He dreaded lest the sharp, black eyes of Aunt Mary Fenwick should read his grievous consternation. Casually he inquired:—

"Do you take any stock in such nonsense? You know how little it takes to set the women's tongues wagging."

"It does sound silly to me, but where there's smoke there may be some fire. Amos Runlett is a man who gets what he wants when he sets out after it. And if he is seriously courtin' Kate Eldredge,

she won't find it easy to give him the mitten. It's reported that he sent her a box of hothouse flowers from Portland last week, and the trustees have raised her salary already."

"What does Cap'n Elmer Gallant think of it, Aunt Mary? He is a sort of guardian to her."

"She is old enough to know her own mind, Dudley. If Elmer Gallant was n't so unselfish he'd be glad of a chance to get Kate's mother and younger sisters off his hands and let somebody else support 'em. Maybe the girl feels in duty bound to sacrifice herself like others I've heard and read of in story-books. Cap'n Elmer sent word for you to expect him this afternoon. He is sojournin' at home for the present."

"What is wrong with his schooner, Aunt Mary? It seems as if all the bad news had been purposely left out of my letters from Spring Haven."

"It was talked over and decided that inasmuch as you could do nothing to help, and had troubles of your own, there was so sense in stirrin' you all up."

"Let it come, please, all at once," commanded Dudley. "Is anybody left in the yard?"

"John Moon, of course. He is the solitary survivor clinging to a raft. He won't come into the house to see you. 'T is n't accordin' to custom. Why don't you step into the office and hear what he has to say?"

Dudley fled at the word to the little room inside the gate where, a few weeks earlier, he had spoken so confidently of holding the organization together. The foreman, gnarled and gaunt, upheaved himself from Israel's chair and laid aside a section of a model which he was smoothing down with sandpaper. A man of towering stature in his youth, the powerful shoulders were dragged forward by years of hard labor with a shipwright's tools.

"It's good to set eyes on you again, Dudley," said he, in a voice which chronic asthma had roughened. "Nothing slow about you as a fancy skipper. That homeward trip was bulletined in the window of the 'Evening Express' office. They pretty near got out an extra. Sorry Israel is n't here to brag and set up the seegars."

"I carried my luck into port, John, and lost it in Spring Haven. What went wrong with the yard? Was it lack of ready money?"

"Mostly that," reluctantly answered John Moon. "The same nor'easter that blowed you offshore caught some of the little fellows. They was ripped to smithereens aloft and you could ha' hove a cat through the seams of the old-timers. Four of 'em limped in and kept us busy. I could n't ask 'em to settle their bills in advance. There was canvas and other material to buy, and I had to put on several more men. You left me enough in the bank to pull it through by stretchin' every dollar, advancin'

some of my own, and usin' the Fenwick credit as far as it would go. But you made out a check for eight hundred, unbeknownst to me, and it made things awkward. Several checks I made out were no good, went to protest right here in Spring Haven, stamped across 'em '*No funds*' in red ink."

The foreman paused and wiped his face with a sleeve of his coat. There was anguish in his soul, as though he talked of death or fatal illness. Dudley Fenwick understood and compassionately exclaimed:—

"My own fault absolutely, John. There was — there was no way to notify you that the check for eight hundred had been drawn against the account. Those bad checks of yours gave the yard a black eye, of course."

"Hit us between wind and water, Dudley. Our credit was none too strong after Israel died. You know how the town felt about the yard. As a business proposition, it ought to have died with him. And there's a different spirit in the bank now. A new policy, I guess. They talked ugly to me, a regular keel-haulin'. All I asked was to wait till you got home. The mortgage on the yard was referred to and the new cashier was for foreclosin' at once. He's a new hand, that light-sparred, freckled snoozer that crawled in through the cabin window because he's some kin to Amos Runlett."

"And they refused to wait for me, John?"

“Precisely. What was the use of my sendin’ you word? I knew you had no money besides wages due as a mate, and no friends in Norfolk to turn to. What you drew the eight hundred for was a mystery to me, but it was an emergency or you would n’t ha’ done it. Elmer Gallant brought the Mary Fenwick in for some new sails before he loaded plaster at the best freight he had picked up in a year. The tail-end of the blow caught him off Cape Ann. I could n’t fit him out, Dudley. The blocks were knocked out from under me as far as raisin’ money went or gettin’ trusted for a penny’s-worth of anything.”

“What about those other schooners that came in for repairs, John? Were you able to finish work on them?”

“Not entirely. What I earned on two of ‘em I lost on the others. After workin’ up what stuff there was in the yard I run short of material. And my extra men got wind of the trouble with the bank and refused to wait a minute for their pay. The jobs dragged and the owners behaved fractious. There was a little stir in lumber freights and it riled ‘em dreadful to be hung up. They claimed damages for delay and threatened attachments against the property. I had to get rid of ‘em somehow, so I paid towage to Bath on both schooners and they were hauled out in another yard.”

“And then you went out of commission — laid off all hands?” sadly spoke the heir and successor

of Israel Fenwick, feeling so much pity for the foreman that his own concerns had shifted into the background.

For old John Moon the world had tumbled about his ears and he sat bedazed amid the ruins. Eighty years from father to son, a shipyard always of clean, honorable repute, but now disgraced in its own community. Better to have closed the gates when Israel slipped his cable. As strong as oak was John Moon's habit of fidelity, and he brought no accusation, withheld all reproaches, but none the less Dudley Fenwick realized that he stood indicted as faithless to his trust. Unwittingly the elder brother, the black sheep of his generation, had paid himself in full for all the fancied injuries and losses suffered in his father's house.

"I let all the men go," said the foreman, after a long silence. "Some of them had been given those worthless checks of mine. I made that good with money of my own. They talked, of course. Anything more to say to me, Dudley, about how you happened to draw that eight hundred without tellin' me? It don't seem like a great amount to do so much mischief, but the moral effect was bound to blow up a stiff breeze in a town where the good name of the Fenwicks was always as solid as the everlastin' hills."

"I can't explain, John, — I wish to God I could, — but if Israel were alive I think he would forgive

me. Perhaps he knows, as it is. I shall have to go to sea again, day after to-morrow."

"Here is the statement I wrote out for you, Dudley."

"Thank you. What have you heard from our other schooners, the Grant and the Anne Dudley? Are they earning anything?"

"Wesley Amazeen is doin' well with the Anne. Left Baltimore last week with sewer pipe for Havana, and laid out some money on her without askin' me for it. Says he cal'lates to go shares again with you by summer. Sam Pickering grumbles as usual, but he keeps joggin' and pays his way — granite to Boston, to build a new poorhouse, says he, for coastwise skippers."

"And owners," suggested Dudley.

He was glad to end the interview with the man who had reason to believe him recreant, no better than his brother Charlie. There was no mending this sorry situation and he went at once to the Spring Haven National Bank. It was an old institution with conservative traditions, soundly managed and unversed in high finance. As far back in boyhood as Dudley could remember, Ellery H. Titus had been the president. The urchins still threw snowballs at his high hat and mimicked his stately march down India Street beneath a green umbrella when summer days grew hot. He was pompous and rather dull, deluding himself with the common error that to be the president of a bank

implies some extraordinary ability. Like Alfred Whittier, the sea-cook, he was large, blank, and flabby, but gifted with less intelligence, courage, and resourcefulness. A kindly man, however, and a pillar of society.

He was neatly peeling an apple when Dudley Fenwick sent in his name. Cutting it into quarters, he laid them in a precise row, began to munch number one, and was graciously pleased to grant admittance. Dudley was far from calm and his eye caught those pieces of apple. The absurd idea haunted him that he must state his case and get an answer before Ellery H. Titus finished eating section four. False teeth made it a leisurely process, however, and the caller felt less pressed for time as he mentioned the matter of the protested checks.

"I was sure there must be a mistake somewhere," mildly remarked the president. "The incident was not referred to me for advice. I learned of it later, on the street. Personally I might have delayed action, until you could be notified. Your father was a director of this bank some years ago."

"This trouble of mine was a misunderstanding, Mr. Titus. It is the first time you have had to question the Fenwick account. You are an old friend of Israel and you know what it means to me to be financially outlawed in Spring Haven. I am anxious to sell some securities or borrow on them, whichever you think is the better way."

"What have you got, Dudley? You must have conjured assets, like a rabbit out of a hat."

"I am promised twenty thousand dollars in the Elizabeth Wetherell. It is a compromise settlement of a salvage claim against Amos Runlett as managing owner."

Ellery H. Titus deliberately returned to his apple, then clasped his hands across his curving waistcoat and assumed that gravely thoughtful mien familiar to patrons of the Spring Haven National Bank. Presently he relaxed, the pose was cast aside, and for once he was an ordinary human being as he explained:—

"We may as well talk it over as between friends, Dudley. You probably have not heard. I retire at the close of the fiscal year, in April. An old fogey, — out-of-date, — I am marking time as a figurehead. It is fair to acquaint you with the fact because it affects any advice I may offer, in so far as you continue relations with the bank. I shall have no influence with the board of directors in future."

Dudley was shocked. Ellery H. Titus was a local institution, like the Fenwick shipyard. Bewildered, he said:—

"Then I don't know which way to turn. I simply must be sure of raising a certain amount of cash, and if I could leave the matter in your hands —"

"Twenty thousand in a Wetherell vessel, you say, and Amos Runlett made you take it instead of money?" resumed the president, none too cheer-

fully. He crossed the floor and turned the key in the door. Raising a plump finger as a warning to secrecy, he continued: "The banks and the ship-brokers are not as favorably disposed as formerly toward the Wetherell fleet. It is not known to the general public as yet, and I am not at liberty to disclose my source of information, but competition may kill these big schooners as dead as a doornail within the next two or three years. Thurber & Gerrish will soon ask for bids on building a dozen steam colliers of six and eight thousand tons capacity, fast steel ships that can make the run between Boston and Norfolk in two days. They have been able to secure all the capital required. As you know, the Wetherell vessels were launched for this trade when there were almost no steamers to handle it. They have been able to operate at a profit for two reasons. The fleets of barges under tow can't starve them out, and Amos Runlett is a genius at managing his own business. Once let capital discover that coastwise coal steamers are a good investment and others will follow the lead of Thurber & Gerrish."

"Then Amos Runlett knew this when he offered me twenty thousand dollars in shares?" angrily demanded Dudley.

"That is a nut for you to crack. I have seldom been able to catch a weasel asleep. You mentioned selling. I doubt if you can find a market at such short notice, and the price would probably mean a loss to

you. Borrow on the stuff if you have to, but no more than can be helped. As long as the schooners are paying dividends, you will have this income to offset the interest and insurance charges. If you wish, I will see what this bank thinks of the security. Send me the transfer certificates as soon as possible. Too bad you find it necessary."

"It is a question of honor, Mr. Titus, anyway I look at it," strongly affirmed Dudley. "For one thing, I promised a share of the salvage to the men who helped me save the schooner. Until I find out where I stand, I shall have to scale the reward and divide a thousand dollars among the five of them."

"That is praiseworthy of you," said the banker. "I admire you for your loyalty. And the shipyard?"

"Another thousand there, to square John Moon's accounts. Will the bank foreclose on the mortgage?"

"Not unless you default. Foreclosure was mentioned, I believe, when you kicked up a scandal with those protested checks, but your ownership of these securities is bound to make a difference. I shall be glad to keep you posted, as a personal favor."

"I dare not set the yard going again on borrowed money," sighed Dudley. "These vessel shares are all I own and they may be worthless before long, you tell me. I hoped to clear off the mortgage with them some day and give the property a fighting chance."

"What was it Israel used to say?" replied Ellery Titus: "'God Almighty's wind is cheaper than steam

and always was!' He could not comprehend that trade can't wait for the wind in this slap-dash age. He was out of date, like myself. Two thousand, then, is what you wish to borrow from the bank?"

"Not a cent more, sir."

"Yes, I am a back number," reflected the deposed president, "but come and see me when you are in town. Old men for council, young men for war."

He was peeling another apple when Dudley left him alone with his vanishing glory. Why laugh at his years of swollen vanity and solemn smugness when in defeat he showed himself a philosopher who declined to rail at destiny? The young man felt grateful for his practical sympathy, but the net result was bitter to the taste. He was ashamed to walk the streets of Spring Haven, a Fenwick discredited and unable to say with certainty when he could meet his obligations. Amos Runlett had outwitted him and perhaps the bank might refuse to accept the shares as collateral.

At any rate, it would be impossible to arrange the loan before sailing and Captain Dudley Fenwick must run away from John Moon, from his neighbors, from the just suspicion of the town. He blamed himself as a fool for listening to Amos Runlett's compromise, for cutting himself adrift from Captain Joe Dabney's fatherly solicitude, for bungling life generally.

Any excuse to avoid the shipyard would have been

welcomed, but Captain Eliner Gallant was coming from Rockland purposely to meet him, and he therefore turned homeward in the afternoon. The chubby, blue-eyed mariner who so faithfully understudied Santa Claus had been coaxed into the house by Aunt Mary Fenwick. He was chirruping to her in the parlor, bashful and rosy. A few men are born without physical fear, a smaller number, and these are infinitely more fortunate, have no fear of to-morrow. The Bible was in the cabin of this simple coastwise skipper and he actually believed its promises. Another friend of Dudley Fenwick who was old-fashioned and out of date, hopelessly incapable of making money by filching it from others less shrewd or more trustful!

“I’m surprised to see you so down-at-the-mouth, Dudley,” said he, a trifle anxiously. “I says to John Moon, wait till the boy breezes into port and you’ll shout hip-hooray instead of twiddling your thumbs and mutterin’ doleful mutters to yourself. The way it was, Dudley, that fat cook of yours came b’ilin’ along from Norfolk oozing conversation at every pore, and some of it was what you might call glad tidings. Part of his yarn about you was highly romantic — pshaw, the last thing Kate Eldredge told me in the library to-day was to be careful of jammin’ my oar in where it did n’t belong. Folks’ private affairs are their own, says she, unless congratulations are in order.”

"I'll drown Alfred in a kettle of his own pea-soup," cried young Captain Fenwick with such tremendous vehemence that Captain Elmer bounced up from the cushion like a rubber ball and wished he had heeded the counsel of his niece. His own schooner had never been put on the other tack with half the haste he showed in talking about something else.

"Correct, Dudley, — smother the villain in his own soup-pot, heels up; and, as I was about to say, this mild spell is a weather-breeder or I can't read the signs. The Elizabeth bother you any across the Shoals?"

"She came through like a yacht. You ned some sails, I'm told, but you may have to wait a little longer. I hope to —"

"Don't you lose a mite o' sleep over me and the Mary Fenwick. She is snugged down all comfortable where she is, and I'm huggin' a red-hot stove' at home in Rockland. Fact is, Dudley, with March coming on, as rough a month as there is, it's temptin' Providence for me to go to sea."

"But you can't afford to loaf. Any cargoes in sight?"

"I lost the plaster charter, but suthin' was said about a load of Aroostook potatoes to New York. There's other schooners to take 'em. If you can't forget me as one of your worries I shall feel real vexed. For a change I'll enjoy a little dory fishin' till spring."

"But that is a game for younger men," objected Dudley. "It's not right for you to endure it. I seem to spoil everything I touch, but if you will be patient I'll get your vessel ready for sea somehow."

Captain Elmer Gallant fished out a handkerchief and violently blew his nose. He was easily moved and the misfortunes of others were always more serious than his own. Afraid of treading on forbidden ground, but absorbed in Dudley's welfare, he awkwardly confided: —

"Amos Runlett has been actin' friendly to me all of a sudden. There was no love lost between us in years gone by when he was afloat in a schooner. I met him here in Spring Haven the other day and he stopped me to shake hands and chat as sociable as you please. He had heard the Fenwick yard was closed and my vessel laid up. And he seemed sorry and interested. Too bad to be idle, says he, and why not bring the Mary Fenwick around to Portland and have her fitted out? He'd be glad to pay the bills and let me settle at my convenience, whenever the schooner could earn it."

"And you refused this generous offer?" rapped out Fenwick, nursing a fresh grievance against his employer.

"Naturally," replied Captain Elmer Gallant. "It was n't *me* that Amos Runlett was so anxious to please. I presume he figgered I was too dumb to fathom his manœuvres. I might ha' been more soft-

spoken, but it sort of got my back up. I told him he'd better peddle his charity to libraries which ain't in the habit of lookin' a gift horse in the mouth. He meant no offence, says he, and beggars could n't always be choosers."

Here the conversation lagged. It obviously occurred to Dudley to say, at parting: —

"Your niece, Miss Eldredge, is well and enjoying her work, I hope, Captain Elmer."

"Anything to hinder you from droppin' in to find out for yourself? She'll be disappointed if you don't."

Before going to sea again, Dudley ardently desired to see the face and hear the voice of the girl who had lived in his thoughts as a thrilling memory, but what could he say to her in explanation of the hateful gossip which had besmirched his affairs? That he must wait upon the pleasure of Amos Runlett before he could obtain assets which were even then of uncertain value? That he must leave his pressing debts of honor unpaid and insecure? The thought of Captain Elmer Gallant, held at home with a crippled schooner, hurt him like a wound.

Restless, angry with himself, he rambled through the deserted shipyard. Beside the weather-beaten staging was the pile of massive timbers which the team of stout horses had hauled for a keel when Israel last dreamed of "building another one." This reminder was too poignant, and Dudley Fenwick walked at

random into an alley which twisted away from the shore and joined one of the small streets grown shabby and untenanted with the decline of shipping.

Startling was the glimpse of a crimson sweater and the figure of a girl trim and vigorous who crossed his vision at the end of the street and would have been gone, but she chanced to look toward the glowing sunset that tipped with fire the hills beyond the river, and so spied the young man, who stood irresolute. She decided the problem for him by halting with a gay smile of recognition and a wave of the hand that signalled the good-comradeship of their first meeting.

As he hastened nearer, all his foolish reluctance forgotten, it was joyously manifest to him that, in one thing, he had shown a wisdom beyond reproach. There were other girls as fair, perhaps, but none so fair in his sight. The red of her cheek and the curve of it, the aspect of reliant health and serene poise, the fine frankness that scorned coquetry, made her for Dudley Fenwick the flower of old New England.

He was rather ruefully embarrassed, as if caught in the act of hiding from her, and she promptly accused him of the crime.

“Do you know, I have a suspicion that you were planning to dodge if you saw me first. What an uncomfortable position for me — in the rôle of the pursuer! Have you anything to say for yourself?”

“Nothing very convincing,” replied Dudley whose emotions were confused.

She became serious as she said:—

“I understand perfectly what the matter is, Mr. Fenwick. You are under the delusion that you have lost your friends, or some of them. What nonsense! Does Captain Elmer Gallant seem to think any less of you? Then why should you forfeit the respect of his niece? I can read your mind, you see.”

“Then please tell me who has been most in my mind since I said good-bye to you, Miss Eldredge.”

“Why, that is easy to answer. Her name is—well, it begins with a clinging vine and ends with a ring. So poetic and appropriate. Ivy Belle! And as the romantic climax of a shipwreck, nothing could be more complete.”

“Completely untrue,” was the indignant denial. “That confounded cook again! I have decided to kill him on sight.”

“How brutal of you!” lightly jested Kate. “And he is such a loyal shipmate and so pleased with your good fortune.”

It was profoundly unsatisfactory to him to have this barrier of misunderstanding come between them when he craved the comprehension which had been so responsive when first they met. He looked so grieved and hurt that she penitently confessed:—

“I used a headache as an excuse to leave the library before closing time. Can you guess why? I walked through this little street as the nearest way to the river and the shipyard. It was really a pursuit,

after all. I had pledged my faith in you, that other afternoon, if you remember. And I wanted you to know that the pledge and the faith were still unbroken. I might have written this to you, but it would n't seem the same."

"And you were so sure that I would feel ashamed to come and say good-bye to you?" asked Fenwick.

"Not ashamed. What shall I call it? Too proud, for one thing. Too much wrapped up in yourself, for another."

"A frank opinion, Miss Eldredge, and it hits me between the eyes. I have let myself be warped with brooding over my own hard luck and blunders. If I were the right sort of a friend of yours I would have been thinking more of your own splendid fight instead of whining by myself."

"Oh, I did n't mean to sound as unfeeling as that," she cried, regretting her candor. "There is nothing splendid in my humble tale of bread-and-butter. I make mistakes and lose my temper and am woefully ignorant about books and things I ought to know. People are very patient with me, and the joy of independence is wonderful."

She possessed the power of communicating her own clear-eyed, unfaltering courage. Fenwick was like a good steel blade a little dulled by hacking at adversity. This girl could send him forth again all keen and ready to renew the conflict, and his smile came back, boyish, engaging, as he said: —

“Those who have nothing to win or lose miss half the fun. The unhappiness of it is when others have to be drawn into your troubles without deserving it.”

“Captain Elmer Gallant, for instance? Did he scold or complain? Did he seem unhappy?”

“Pure gold!” exclaimed Dudley. “And mighty few old shipmasters on their beam-ends would have the grit to handle Amos Runlett as he did.”

He paused, alarmed and sorry, having spoken before he thought. Kate Eldredge regarded him with questioning surprise and her manner was more distant as she replied: —

“Perhaps you assumed too much, Mr. Fenwick. You say that I have listened to stories about you which were flimsy gossip. Are you quite sure you have not been guilty?”

Abruptly taken to task, Dudley was not prepared to deny that he had been made wretched by Aunt Mary Fenwick’s tattle. He evaded the issue, however, for to yield with grace when put in the wrong by a woman is not a normal masculine virtue. Stubbornly he rejoined: —

“Perhaps I had no right to mention Amos Runlett as I did, but was it fair of you to believe what you heard of me and make a joke of it — the fickle, roving sailor with his heart on his sleeve and an eye for the girl that’s nearest?”

His impetuosity had carried him so far that Kate

Eldredge drew back a little, half-smiling, her voice with a trace of mockery in it.

“But why not offer you my felicitations? It is a pretty story and it seems too bad to spoil the romance. And when she is rich and beautiful —”

“But you ought to have known that I would n’t look twice at any other girl after meeting you,” he protested, very much the bold sailor.

“Am I as vain as that, Mr. Fenwick? It is not considered one of my faults.”

“Very well, Miss Eldredge, you refuse to take me seriously, and I can’t blame you. I am a pretty sorry joke in Spring Haven, no doubt of that. But, as a friend, all I beg of you to tell me about Amos Runlett is this: Does he annoy you? Have his attentions made you conspicuous? Does he use his position as a trustee of the library to make himself disagreeable? I must know. If you have no reason to dislike him, then I promise to keep quiet and I ask you to forgive me.”

This effrontery went unrebuked. Kate had learned that Dudley Fenwick was to go in command of the Elizabeth Wetherell and to her his career seemed to hang upon the good-will and favor of Amos Runlett. Perhaps she cared more for this chivalrous young shipmaster than he imagined. If so, it would account for her desire to shield his welfare at her own expense. And she might feel justified in a white lie in order to prevent an enmity which would be disastrous to

Dudley Fenwick. Whatever the motive, she forgave him for what he said, and her demeanor was very earnest as she said: —

“There is nothing whatever to make you anxious about me. And you are not to worry over Mr. Amos Runlett. If I need a friend and a champion, I promise to let you know.”

CHAPTER IX

THE STRATEGY OF CAPTAIN TERRY COCHRAN

INSTEAD of spending another day in Spring Haven, Fenwick chose to return to his schooner and hold himself in readiness to finish the salvage transaction before sailing, if possible. Kate Eldredge had been kind, but he craved more than that. It was the intolerable thought of the middle-aged suitor, so brisk, well-groomed, and masterful, which bit like acid and refused to be ignored. An old wives' tale, perhaps, but his questions had been left unanswered, his intervention declined with thanks. In short, he had been meddlesome and unmannerly.

All of which he mulled over in his loneliness and prowled on deck when he should have been sleeping the sleep of the robust young mariner. When he reported at the office his temper had hardened and there was to be no more meek acceptance of whatever might be doled out to him. Amos Runlett may have noticed the difference and stiffened to meet it, for he merely nodded and waited for Fenwick to disclose his tactics.

Cool and business-like was the latter as he suggested:—

“Those certificates have been transferred to me, I presume. And they are worth twenty thousand dol-

lars, present valuation. But I have your word for that, Mr. Runlett."

"It was your own estimate, Fenwick. When you tried to gouge me in Norfolk, it was for twenty-five thousand as a quarter value of the Elizabeth Wetherell."

"But if my estimate of the market value was too high, the square thing was for you to set me right. A pig in a poke was no part of the bargain."

The managing owner opened a penknife and whittled a pencil, but neither it nor his wits needed sharpening. This Fenwick was getting to be a chronic nuisance, but as a skipper he was too valuable to lose.

"Owner's risks," said he, with a careless smile. "What put this notion in your head that there was a flaw in the bargain?"

"I wanted to borrow some money, and Wetherell vessels were called poor security."

"Went to the Spring Haven Bank, did you?" waspishly inquired Mr. Runlett.

"Why, of course. It was the only place to go. I am a stranger anywhere else."

"Did you talk to the cashier about it?"

"No, I asked the president's advice as an old friend of my father."

"I might have guessed that. Ellery H. Titus is a busted balloon. Peeled an apple and looked wiser than Solomon, did n't he? Locked the door and told it in all confidence! I've seen him perform all his

little tricks. And so that old counterfeit threw a scare into you!"

"He gave me his honest opinion for what it was worth, and I think he told the truth," indignantly exclaimed Fenwick. "He will try to arrange the loan for what money I need, as soon as I send him the papers."

"You expect to dump it into that dead-and-gone shipyard of yours? What else would you borrow for? Well, you can't get a dollar from the Spring Haven Bank for any such idiotic purpose. Ellery Titus never knows anything until it flies up and hits him, but after the next directors' meeting I expect to carry that bank in my pocket. I am the man behind the reorganization and I deserve credit for brushing a few of the cobwebs off the town that raised me. If you can't be trusted to steer clear of bankruptcy, Fenwick, I shall have to hinder you as far as I can. Why, you are in all wrong with the bank now. Your checks are no good. You went off to sea and left that doddering John Moon in charge, and he snarled you up in a lubber's knot."

"If you had been as straight with me as he has, I would n't suspect you of working against me now," Fenwick retorted. "What I propose to do with the shipyard is none of your business. How much would your bank lend on those shares of mine if somebody else walked in with them? What are they actually worth? What will they be worth a year from now?"

"See here, Fenwick, this is doing you no good whatever. Take the *Elizabeth* to sea on the next tide. I can't give you those certificates to-day. Miss Wetherell is not in Boston. My letter missed her by a day. She has gone to Florida. Her signature is necessary in behalf of the estate. I can promise to have things fixed up when you come back from Norfolk. The faster the passage, the sooner you can be an owner. And I'll also promise that you will be paid a dividend for this trip if the vessel earns it."

"I hope she sinks and you lose every dollar of her!" was the passionate outbreak as Fenwick stood over him with clenched fists.

"No danger of that," was the unperturbed reply. "You think too much of your professional reputation to strand the vessel just because you dislike me."

"I don't want her, and I may refuse to go this trip. It is one excuse after another to evade a settlement. I'd rather go back to one of my own schooners than take orders from you. But my hands are tied just now. I will let you know in an hour."

"I hear you, Fenwick. There is a limit to my patience and you have run pretty close to it. One hour, then. I have a capable master on the waiting list, right here in Portland."

"You are a clever dodger, Mr. Runlett, and I'm not quick enough to corner you, but it's a poor game to play. And I am no bucko mate with a pair of brass knuckles as the final argument, but I warn you

to be straight with me and with Spring Haven, or, so help me God, I will take it out of your hide!"

"And I will clap you in jail if you so much as flourish a finger at me!" cried the other man, just as emphatically. "If you can get away with your bluff, it will be the first skipper that ever made me trim sail. I'm glad to have you declare yourself. A shindy is more to my taste than being talked to death."

Almost cheerfully and without bravado, Dudley Fenwick had hurled the challenge and it was received in a similar spirit. They were men hardly disciplined at sea, with no soft-fibred shrinking from a physical collision, and Fenwick used this manner of speech because it best expressed his purpose and could not be misunderstood. In the stress of the moment they reverted to the code of the deck and the forecastle and perhaps they respected each other the more for it.

Fenwick swung out of the building and went to the wharf, where, as he had foreseen, his elder brother was waiting to resume his own tale of woe. He was the forlorn complication which had caused Dudley to hesitate instead of breaking with Amos Runlett on the spot. He was unable to release himself from the grip of circumstances and the bond of a higher duty than his own freedom.

Israel Charles sat upon a string-piece of the wharf, his back against a piling, the image of futility. The sight of him made Dudley hot with righteous wrath,

but although the provocation was much greater than before, the inner prompting was toward the charity that suffereth long. Charlie was a misfortune and an obligation, not an enemy to be punished.

"Well, what did the doctor say?" asked Dudley.

"Good news for you. I'll be dead and out of the way in a year or so. My guess on this consumption thing was no false alarm. He told me a lot of stuff about home treatment, but what's the use? Can you see my wife feeding me every two hours, fussing over a sick man who must live outdoors the year round? She'd sooner see me croak. Where is the meal ticket? Who pays the bills?"

"I do, Charlie," was the instant response. "What about a sanitarium?"

"A pipe, a cinch, if I had the price, Dud. Right here in Maine, back in the woods, says the doctor, and he gives me better than an even break if I can lay up in one of those joints. I'm not trying to pull your leg this time. On the level, I'm not asking you to do one more little thing for me. I played you to a finish with that phony check. You don't have to tell me that. Call up this doctor person before you sail, just to prove I'm no liar for once."

"I believe you, Charlie. Yes, I will talk it over with him. You can't be trusted with money and your wife is no better. All I have is what I can earn in the Elizabeth Wetherell. I left my wages for the last trip in Spring Haven, something for Aunt Mary Fenwick

and the rest to old John Moon. I shall have to draw in advance to provide for you while I'm gone. Ellery H. Titus won't mind the trouble of handling the matter for me. I will send him instructions, so much to be paid on your account at the sanitarium, and enough to your wife to support her."

Dudley spoke dispassionately, as though they were strangers. Charlie's sullen aloofness gave way to astonishment as he drawled: —

"The good Samaritan had nothing on you, Dud. I must be dreaming. None of that serves-him-right stuff, not a word. What's doing in Spring Haven? Anything said at the bank about that eight-hundred-dollar stunt of mine?"

"The forged check?" muttered Dudley, resolved to deny his brother the pleasure of knowing what a deadly weapon had been used. "Oh, it was charged against my account without any question. Don't bring it up again, Charlie."

"Not much profit in me as salvage, is there, Dud? Thank you, anyhow, for risking repair bills on me. Never thought I'd thank you for anything, did you? The old man used to say I had a yellow streak. He was the stern and upright parent, and he made an awful botch of bringing me up."

"Why don't you look yourself over during the next year," advised Dudley, "and see if this habit of blaming all hands except yourself is n't childish? Get rid of it. You certainly have been a cur of a brother

to me, but if I find any manliness in you, the slightest prospect of a fresh start, I will stay alongside and push for all I am worth."

In this manner did Dudley Fenwick square accounts for the wrong that had been done him. It compelled him to lower his colors to Amos Runlett, to knuckle under for the time, but it was a long lane that had no turning and he could take the Elizabeth Wetherell to sea with an unvexed conscience.

She was ready to sail when he climbed aboard, but before he could give an order, four sailors knocked off work and marched aft to request an interview. Behind them followed the cook, wiping his hands on his apron. Archie Holt, with Sidney at his elbow, doffed his cap, scraped a foot, and excitedly declaimed:—

“Beggin’ yo’ pardon, Cap’n Fenwick, but big money has done been comin’ to us niggers for a long time, and we ain’t seen nuthin’ of it a-tall. Meanin’ no disrespec’ to you, suh, what for we done salvaged this vessel? Mistah Runlett behavin’ fractious? We done took a powerful disfavor to that white man in No’folk.”

“You done said it fo’ me, buddy,” loudly agreed Sidney.

More truculent than the others, the coal-black seaman with a bad record rolled out in chest tones:—

“Pay me mah big money, Cap’n, or I gwine prance asho’e and muss somebody up. Where this Mistah Runlett keep hisself?”

"Don't you slice nobody, Gus," admonished Archie. "Behave yo'self, man. What for you foolin' with that knife? Put it a-way befo' Cap'n Fenwick busts yo' crust."

The voice of Alfred was heard like oil upon the waters. Amiably he interrupted: —

"They've been jawin' and wranglin' in the fo'-castle all day, Cap'n, and the scheme is to quit and delay the vessel unless you can satisfy 'em that they ain't been stung."

There was no doubt of their personal loyalty to Fenwick, and he was aware that they believed him when he said: —

"I have been disappointed, boys, and you will receive less than I hoped to give you. I have n't seen a penny of it myself, but I reached an agreement with Mr. Runlett and he has promised to clean up the matter at the end of this trip. Until then I am no better off than you, and I'm sure the money would be as welcome to me."

This appeal had an effect. The four malcontents conferred in whispers while Alfred ambled back to the galley, untroubled by sordid aspirations. Fenwick regretted that such a situation should breed discord in the ship's company. These sailors might remain faithful to him, but in the event of another crisis at sea they would be apt to let their hatred of Amos Runlett, the sense of injury, predominate. Presently they agreed to get the ship under way, but there was

no light-hearted banter at the winches and the response was sluggish when the mates tried to set a livelier pace. It was a different spirit from that of the thrilling record passage homeward-bound, communicating itself to the other men in the forecastle. The *Elizabeth Wetherell* was a discontented ship.

From a window of his office Amos Runlett caught glimpses of her masts as she towed past the waterfront and turned to seek the open sea and the familiar course to the southward. He smiled to himself, as though satisfied with the day's work. Business was business and a sensible man protected his own interests before worrying about the other fellow's. Fenwick had kicked over the traces and required a firm hand to keep him steady. His threat of leaving the *Elizabeth* had been a fit of bluster soon forgotten.

In accordance with his desire to brush the cobwebs from Spring Haven and for another reason more strictly personal, Mr. Runlett planned to visit that drowsy port at least once a week. It so happened, however, that the management of the fleet detained him a fortnight after the rebellious Dudley Fenwick had betaken himself to sea. Freights dropped to sixty cents a ton, the demand for coal slackened, and it required the talent of a naval strategy board to keep a dozen big schooners moving. The *Elizabeth Wetherell* had reached Norfolk, reporting a slow, uneventful passage, and was held there for orders until Amos Runlett could be certain of her destination.

One day there steamed into Boston Harbor a powerful, ocean-going tug with a white band around her funnel. Two barges churned in her wake, but she seemed to pull them with less speed than usual, and Captain Terry Cochran, at the door of the engine-room, might have been heard to say to the chief:—

“We came near not getting here at all, Scotty. ’T is a case of acute indigestion of the condenser, I take it. Will we be laid up long?”

“A week, if we’re lucky. The condenser is n’t all of it. We needed some new boiler tubes before we left Norfolk, and I refuse to plug any more of ’em. You took a chance, same as usual.”

“There was method in my madness, Scotty. There are excellent machine shops in this city where the beans come from. I will have leisure to investigate the neighboring State of Maine, a sad place where the curse of prohibition rests heavy on a population that has every excuse for hurling one in now and then. ’T is the climate that’s wrong. Too much of it. The sleighing is poor after June.”

“Any spot in mind or will you ramble for your health, Cap’n Cochran? I may want to ’phone you.”

“Spring Haven is my port of call. The friend I have in mind is Dudley Fenwick. You know him.”

“But he’s at the south’ard end of the run. We passed his schooner in the Roads, discharged.”

“Did n’t I sing out to him? I had no chance to see him ashore, with our coming in from Bermuda and

out again with these empties for down east. Cap'n Joe Dabney spoke him, however, and relayed it to me that Dudley had to leave things afoul and adrift at home. I will merely rummage for information, Scotty, as a harmless diversion."

Gay as a troubadour, Terry Cochran set out next morning to discover Spring Haven. The motive was unselfish and it might please Captain Joe Dabney to learn how he had spent his time ashore, no more in reckless escapades, but as a seeker after truth. He would be quiet and dignified, attracting no attention, but the man who spoke ill of Fenwick would have a chance to collect on his accident insurance policy.

At noon he was sauntering through India Street to the Spring Haven Inn. On the walls of the low-raftered dining-room were many paintings and photographs of ships and barks and schooners. They fascinated Terry Cochran who loved the romance of blue-water, and he examined them one by one, astonished at the number of them which bore the legend, "Built by Israel Fenwick," with the date of launching. They went back through the years that seemed mistily remote, to 1840 and 1850, beautiful ghosts of ships which had lived in a vanished era of American achievement and daring.

Already Terry Cochran comprehended what it meant to young Dudley to be a Fenwick of Spring Haven and why he was unable to dissever his own fortunes from the fate of the shipyard. Pride of ances-

try and its obligations were not unknown to a Cochran whose father was the exiled younger son of an ancient Irish house.

From the Inn Terry went in quest of the shipyard and was dismayed beyond measure to find it forsaken. It seemed a dreary place, a graveyard of lost hopes, as he roamed from the gate to the river and the lonely schooner *Mary Fenwick*.

“A little of this goes a long way with me,” murmured the pilgrim, who was seldom melancholy. “By the symptoms, I am holding an inquest. Never a kick or a flutter left. If Dudley Fenwick saw it as it is now, his heart must be broken. I will circulate among the natives and learn what the yard died of.”

The shops and sheds were locked, the snow had drifted against the doors, and stout wooden shutters were swung against the windows of the little office building in which John Moon had suffered and waited alone. Terry Cochran decided to inquire at the square, white house outside the gate as the nearest source of information. Aunt *Mary Fenwick* opened the door in her flurried manner, described a stranger, and eyed him with suspicion. It was the New England tradition, perhaps transmitted from the days of lurking Indians and concealed tomahawks. The grim reception by no means disturbed the ingratiating young man who bowed and exclaimed:—

“Maybe this is where Dudley Fenwick lives. And

you bear a likeness to him unless I am greatly deceived. If he had told me about an older sister —”

Aunt Mary had never been blarneyed in her life. Gallantry was an unknown language, but she had a dry sense of humor which caused her severe features to relax as she replied: —

“You must be dreadful near-sighted, or you’re aimin’ to get inside and steal the spoons. I am old enough to be Dudley’s grandmother and I show it in every gray hair and wrinkle. Who might you be and what is your errand?”

Terry slid a foot inside the door, again bowed with the homage due royalty, and answered: —

“You are his aunt? Blood will tell, as the saying is. It was easy to read that he came from genteel people. I am the man who towed his schooner into Norfolk when he saved her for the owners. Cochran is my name.”

“Cap’n Terry Cochran? Why, bless my soul, come in and welcome, and stay for tea!” cried Aunt Mary. “I mistook you for a peddler or a sewing-machine agent. They are young and slick and fresh, as a rule.”

“Compliments are flying both ways,” laughed he, following her into the parlor. “You are Miss Fenwick?”

“Sister to Israel and a mother to Dudley since he was half-grown, Cap’n Cochran.”

She actually giggled when he selected the hair-cloth sofa, slipped off its shining surface, tried it

again, and clutched at the mahogany back with a frightened air.

"You have to learn how, Miss Fenwick," said he, "like footing it on an icy deck."

"Don't speak of icy decks, Cap'n Cochran. It gives me the shivers to be reminded of what Dudley went through. And poor Cap'n William Dodge that's never been heard of since, with his wife whose acquaintance I made one time at a musical festival in Portland."

This offered Terry an opening and he hastened to say: —

"I had a hand in it, as you know, Miss Fenwick, at the end of a hawser. And the question of salvage was raised that day I boarded the ship. I was in Norfolk when Mr. Amos Runlett came down to adjust it, and there was a serious disagreement. I found out enough to know that everything at home was tied up to this problem of ready money, the shipyard and so on. 'T is likely Dudley would resent my butting in. I will ask the favor that you say nothing about my visit to Spring Haven. A personal failing of mine is to bother myself with the troubles of my friends."

"There is more going on than Dudley would impart to me," sighed Aunt Mary Fenwick, in a singularly confiding mood. "And John Moon is every mite as close-mouthed. All I know is that Amos Runlett did n't live up to his word. I never saw Dudley so worried and disappointed."

“That was when he was home last voyage?”

“Yes, Cap’n Cochran. Amos Runlett, that I first knew as a little raggedy boy, seems to be interfering with him every which way. I have a very poor opinion of the man myself. And it was an unfortunate day for Spring Haven when he took such a lively interest in the town. A benefactor! Bosh!”

Terry had been given the clue to serve his purpose. He pressed her with no more questions, but made himself entertaining with yarns and nonsense. Artfully suggesting that there must be a girl in the case, he possessed himself of the fact that Dudley admired Kate Eldredge who worked in the library, and Amos Runlett was said to be courting her. Terry glowered at this and it whetted his eagerness to obstruct the course of the detestable Mr. Runlett. Aunt Mary Fenwick applauded this spirit of knight-errantry, but vowed that Cap’n Cochran could no more keep himself hid in Spring Haven than a brass band.

This opinion overlooked his native genius for conspiracy. For several days thereafter he moved softly, with joy in his heart, picking up the threads and weaving them together. He played billiards at the Inn as a travelling salesman who was free with his money and had been sent out to learn his new territory. In the reading-room of the library he sat demurely screened behind a newspaper and stole admiring glances at the fine, vigorous young woman who distributed books at the desk. Too bad he dared not

make himself known to her, but his was a secret mission and there was Ivy Belle to be reckoned with. Jealousy might cause her to misunderstand.

That light-sparred snoozer, the new cashier of the bank, was asked for advice concerning shares of down-east sailing vessels as an investment. Ellery H. Titus, the busted balloon, was lured into conversation when he entered the hotel for a chat with the landlord. He found young Mr. Cochran so deferential and agreeable that they dined together.

"Between the two of us, sir," insinuated Terry, at the proper moment, "would you recommend me to buy into the Wetherell fleet? Your cashier spoke favorably of the schooners, but the word of a man of your high position and sagacity will carry more weight with me."

"I am not at liberty to disclose my source of information," was the flattered response, "but Thurber & Gerrish, of Boston, plan to build a dozen steam colliers —"

"Oh, they do! And who let that nonsense trickle into your left ear?" blurted Terry, forgetting to be humbly respectful.

"Er — your figure of speech is more picturesque than elegant, young man," pompously objected Ellery Titus whose feelings were ruffled. "The information has been known among bankers and ship-brokers for some time. While it lacks official confirmation —"

"T is much more than that it lacks," blazed

Terry, clearing for action. "I am a tow-boat man, Mr. Titus, with connections that are not to be sneezed at, I would have you know. Thurber & Gerrish can't build a steam hencoop. They have a big name in coastwise shipping, but dry rot has killed the firm. They will wind up and quit within a year. Thurber was in New York last month to try and place a blanket mortgage on the property, but he never got a look-in. He got the cold shoulder there, just as he had in Boston. I heard all about it in Norfolk. My own company owns Thurber & Gerrish stock. Amos Runlett does n't know that. I can talk freely to you, Mr. Titus, for I know how much you love the man."

Ellery Titus opened his mouth, found nothing to say, and closed it. He was denied the comfort of peeling an apple. Terry Cochran was sorry for his rudeness and offered an impulsive apology. The president of the Spring Haven National, accused of the most stupid credulity, faltered after a struggle:—

"When the rumor came to me, Mr. Cochran, I sought information from the person best qualified to give it. Many pieces of Wetherell vessels are owned in this town. This was a matter of local concern. I interviewed Mr. Amos Runlett without delay. He confirmed the statement, or such was my impression. I hardly need say that he must have investigated it for himself."

"Runlett confirmed it?" eagerly demanded Terry, running his fingers through his sandy hair. "He knew the story was false. Of course he did. Trust him to run it down, for it was a vital matter. It would smash the market valuation of his own schooners, if true — And he confirmed it to you! It's false, every word of it, I tell you, made of whole cloth. And for what? We have stumbled on a wood-pile that is full of niggers, Mr. Titus, and they don't hail from Norfolk."

The mind of Ellery Titus was laboriously putting two and two together, the process hampered by the natural reluctance to admit that he had been hoodwinked by one of the simplest devices of the stock market. His stupidity was excusable, however, much more so than appeared to Terry Cochran. Literally, for hundreds of years, the business of owning and sailing New England vessels had been conducted in the same simple manner, unvexed and unsullied by the spirit of modern exploitation, speculative only as it risked the hazards of the sea, watered only by the brine beneath its keels. To Ellery Titus, steeped in the traditions of an ancient port, such stratagems were no more to be looked for than a public lottery in town meeting.

"If Amos Runlett wishes to increase his holdings in the Wetherell fleet," said he abstractedly, "the cheapest way to acquire them is to frighten other people into selling them."

"Sure thing," agreed Terry. "What do you bet he did n't start this Thurber & Gerrish story himself? It sounds like a rotten thing to fasten on him, but the wizards of finance get away with it and nobody kicks except the losers. This Amos Runlett can show you something new. He's bright."

"No wonder I have been forced out of the bank," murmured Ellery Titus.

"There were barnacles on your ideas of progress, sir. For another random shot, you might interfere with his use of the bank to buy in this Wetherell stuff. To swing a deal like that requires ready money and lots of it. 'T is likely he may sell some of his own shares as a bluff to shake out the small owners. That would throw a fit into the widows and orphans."

"I personally own forty thousand dollars in sixteenths and thirty-seconds, Mr. Cochran, and I am not a rich man."

"Hold on tight and keep smiling, Mr. Titus, for if Amos Runlett wants to get his hands on it, there's a reason. It looks so tempting to me that I intend to hock my watch and buy. I have sworn off gambling, but 't is a chicken-hearted sport that will not play a sure thing across the board."

"You are an astounding young man," declared the banker. "You make me feel like an old war-horse that heareth the trumpets from afar. How would you undertake to purchase without discovery, — that is, on any considerable scale?"

"You will find me an honest ship-broker who wears gumshoes and was never known to talk in his sleep. Is there such a bird on the coast?"

"I think so. Captain Jonathan Harding has an office in Spring Haven. He once sailed for Amos Runlett and was set ashore in very peremptory style. He has not forgotten it. A reliable man who can be trusted to obey instructions."

"So much for that, thank you kindly," said Terry. "We will now pay our respects to the affairs of my friend Dudley Fenwick, the hero of the plot. As for the villain, we are all set to put a crimp in him, unless the signs point wrong. Dudley is still shy the twenty thousand dollars in shares of the Elizabeth Wetherell, I understand."

"Amos Runlett is to turn over the certificates when Dudley returns to Portland, so the boy wrote me."

"In my eye he will," was the sceptical comment. "I may be wrong, for I should misjudge no man until I catch him with the goods. If Amos Runlett does come across, then you will slip the word to Dudley to hang fast to the shares and let nothing induce him to sell them. But it must not come from me."

"He tried to borrow on them and my bank refused to pass the loan. The fine hand of Amos Runlett, I presume."

"A reasonable guess," replied Terry. "How much cash did Fenwick need?"

“Only two thousand. I was not in a position to advance it personally, under the circumstances. My own affairs are rather uncertain.”

“Change your mind, if you please, Mr. Titus. 'T is the privilege of great men. I will send you a draft for the amount before I sail from Boston. You will carry the loan in your own name. I must stay in the background, 'way back, for this Fenwick lad of ours is full to the neck with New England obstinacy and family pride and you-be-damned independence. He has already turned down friends that would have backed him to the limit. I am trespassing on forbidden ground.”

The display of confidence in him was like a balm to the bruised self-esteem of the fallen financier. He was more fortunate than Humpty-Dumpty, for this Terry Cochran was putting him together again. He replied, with a touch of the old importance:—

“You have made no error of judgment in seeking my coöperation. There is another matter even more delicate to which I feel bound to refer. While in Spring Haven, you have heard reports, no doubt, affecting the credit and the reliability of Dudley Fenwick. I am in a position to assure you that he has done nothing to impair your respect or mine.”

“You don't have to say a word, Mr. Titus. I have formed my own opinion of Dudley Fenwick and there are not enough people in your town to budge it one inch. And I speak for other friends of his.”

CHAPTER X

A BAD NIGGER IN THE FO'CASTLE

WHILE Fenwick waited at Norfolk for orders, two other Wetherell schooners came in, loaded, and sailed to the eastward. They were on time charters, engaged by the year to supply certain New England paper-mills with fuel, and it made the master of the Elizabeth no happier to watch them pass his anchorage. Daily he called at the tow-boat office in hopes of some word from Portland. Captain Joe Dabney sympathized, but was wary of asking too many questions of the young man who had stubbornly elected to go it alone. He considered it permissible, however, to announce one morning:—

“A navy collier was due in to-day, Dudley, to fill up and proceed to Guantanamo. She is report'd by wireless as disabled — a cracked shaft. There are no steamers available at sho't notice, and I reckon if you leg it over to the navy yard you may be able to fix up a charter with Uncle Sam.”

Dudley thanked him and sprinted for the ferry. The commandant was courteously interested and notified Washington. Acceptance was received on the same day, at a price per ton which Amos Rundlett approved by wire. It was so much better than a coastwise trip that Fenwick's spirits rebounded.

He thought it advisable to ship a new crew, getting rid of the negroes who had grumbled incessantly and impeded the southerly passage, but in vain he raked the sailor's boarding-houses for other men. There should have been enough of them loafing about, but if so they shunned the *Elizabeth* as a ship with a bad name. The delay in port, the change of destination to Cuba, had convinced the four sailors with a grievance that they were to be cheated out of their "big money," and the other six in the forecastle, having it dinned into them all day long, were persuaded that they had a rightful share in the feeling against the owner.

This was apparent to Fenwick, but they seemed willing to go with him again, sooner than be idle until other big schooners arrived, and he was given no choice. It was a trifle uncomfortable to surmise that they might have warned other sailors away from his vessel, but the talk ashore was apt to be loud and foolish with five-cent whiskey to inflame it, and he felt confident of handling any crew once they were clear of the Capes. It was a case of making the best of a bad bargain.

He sent them aboard and finished most of his business in Norfolk, intending to go down to the coal-wharf in a ship-chandler's launch with the stores for the voyage. The boxes and barrels were piled high at the edge of the slip when he turned into the alley and was about to jump into the tiny

cabin of the launch. On the after-deck stood a young man, poorly dressed and so swarthy that Fenwick mistook him for a negro, one of the ship-chandler's helpers. He moved aside to make way and they confronted each other in a recognition so amazing to Fenwick that he all but fell into the water. The other man put out a hand to steady him and said, as unemotionally as if they were still shipmates with Captain William Dodge:—

“Hello, Mr. Fenwick. I was going down to your vessel to tell you about it. Landed in Baltimore yesterday and heard you were here. Old coal-wagon still afloat and you in command of her!”

“Peter Strawn! The second mate that went off in the launch when we took to the yawl,” cried Fenwick, rubbing his eyes. “But you were drowned long ago, with the rest of them.”

“No, I was n’t,” replied Peter Strawn, the half-breed Indian who was ever literal-minded. “The rest of ‘em? All dead but me.”

Fenwick fairly flung him into the cabin and closed the door. His miraculous second mate relighted the frazzled butt of a cigar, using three matches before he succeeded. His saturnine visage was patient and composed, as though the mischances of life were as commonplace as its coincidences. Although Fenwick knew that he could not be hurried, a frantic impatience impelled the demand:—

“Dead, you say? Tell me how. The skipper and

his wife? Don't sit there like a wooden figure-head."

"I came to tell you," said Peter Strawn, stolidly puffing at the fearful remnants of the cigar. "A French bark carried me to Havre. I worked my way home in a steamer. Send a cable? What was the use? Six niggers did n't count, and the big Finn was no good. The old man and his wife went down together, and that suited them. I had no money to spend on cables."

"The launch was swamped? And you survived? How did you manage it?" implored Fenwick.

"Cap'n Dodge was too anxious to get the woman ashore. Instead of ridin' it out to a drag, he drove on and risked getting pooped. He got it, a little before daylight, that first night. A sea filled the launch and washed some of the niggers out. The next big sea washed the boat keel up. The woman had a life-buoy, but the water was awful cold, Mr. Fenwick. I tried to help, but the chill went to her heart and stopped it. She did n't suffer. The old man went with her. He did n't care about stayin' on alone, after he lost his woman and his ship. They talked it over beforehand. I heard 'em. Seemed to me they loved each other more than most people. Well, they had their share of good luck, and as he said, when we abandoned ship, it was time for 'em to go."

In this epitaph Peter Strawn expressed his own

profound fatalism. His face brightened a little as he repeated: —

“They knew it was time for ‘em to go. Nothing very sad about that. My time had n’t come.”

“But why did n’t you freeze to death, Peter?”

“I near did. It was almost daylight, I tell you. Then I was picked up. Hung on to an oar. A man can always hang on a bit longer. For a week I was thawin’ out in a bunk aboard the French bark. I fetched along something for you, Mr. Fenwick. It’s a page out of the schooner’s log. The old man wrote and signed it. He gave it to me because I was younger and tougher. I put it in a waterproof match-box, all folded up.”

Fenwick smoothed the creased and rumpled paper. The sea had stained it, but the pencilled writing was legible. It was the official record and memorial, the last act of Captain William Dodge as a shipmaster. Briefly he had set down the facts and circumstances of leaving the Elizabeth Wetherell, assuming all responsibility, stating that the officers and crew had not failed in their duty. There seemed a premonition of the end in the lines just above his signature: —

I hereby commend Mr. Fenwick and believe him qualified to be given command of a vessel. My wife wishes to be kindly remembered to him.

Fenwick stared at the message and became lost in thought while Peter Strawn looked at a newspaper. The spacious cabin of the Elizabeth was vividly re-

called, the harsh, inflexible skipper reading aloud "The Foundations of Civilization" while Amelia was busy with the darning-basket in her lap. Forgotten was their unlovely greed and remembered only were the redeeming virtues which had illumined the obliterating tragedy. Amelia's wish, as her husband had written it upon the leaf torn from the log, was fulfilled, for Fenwick's recollection of her was more than kindly.

Peter Strawn broke into his reverie to say, without curiosity: "Who found the schooner and towed her in? It would have killed Cap'n Dodge. He was a proud man."

"We found her, Peter, five days later. She followed us to the south'ard. This message belongs to the managing owner, I suppose, but I shall wait and give it to him myself. It is the evidence to prove what he pretended to doubt. I lacked the legal, formal proof that the *Elizabeth* was abandoned, that she was a derelict when we found her. And it gave him a loophole, a chance to bluff and bully and delay."

"Did he? The son-of-a-gun! And you could n't make him loosen up?"

"Not yet. But what about yourself? Will you go with me as first mate? I have a troublesome lot of hands and you have the knack of shoving them along. The mate I have is none too anxious to make the trip. He threatened to quit unless I found new men. What do you say?"

"Trouble never bothered me much, Mr. Fenwick. Glad to take the berth, thank you, if you think I'm good enough. When do you sail?"

"To-day, for Guantanamo. You had better cash my order on Captain Dabney's office, buy some clothes, and come down on the tug."

Peter Strawn obeyed, and Fenwick went alone in the ship-chandler's launch, the sense of unreality difficult to overcome. Nothing could be more extraordinary than this incident, after the weeks of speculation, of fading hope, of final belief that the fate of those ten people was forever obscured. Peter Strawn, who could see nothing dramatic in the event, had been inscrutably spared to bear witness. More precious to Fenwick than any fortune in salvage was the vanished skipper's testimony, signed in the presence of death, which cleared the disaster of every doubt and suspicion fostered in the agile mind of Amos Runlett.

The *Elizabeth Wetherell* sailed on the afternoon tide. The last mail of the day brought Captain Joe Dabney a long letter from Terry Cochran in Spring Haven which was read to Ivy Belle at supper. It was sensational, and so redounded to Terry's credit that Captain Joe jubilantly exclaimed: —

"Who said the young rascal was too flighty to manage any business ashore? Why, honey, I'd better stay mighty wide-awake or he'll take the shirt off my back. Sure as you're bo'n, that boy is liable to whip-saw Amos Runlett."



"Terry can do anything, if he is n't kept under by a tyrannical, bumptious boss who thinks he knows it all," sweetly observed the daughter.

"Referrin' to your poor, misunderstood dad? If he can keep up this clip, Ivy Belle, I may have to endorse him as a son-in-law just to prevent all the money from goin' out of the family. He has the nerve to ask me to back his play for fifty thousand as a start-off, and, by Godfrey, I can't refuse. His info'mation is sound. I can't find a flaw in it. Amos Runlett monkeyed with a buzz-saw when he showed himself up as a damn Yankee trader in his dealin's with my young friend, Dudley Fenwick."

"Would you treat Terry politely, dad, instead of shooting him, if he should request the hand of your only child?"

"Quit yo' foolin', Ivy Belle Dabney," admonished Captain Joe, but with no sign of temper. "I sort of picked out Fenwick as the man for you to marry, but he shied off as if he did n't want you. Now, you behave and listen to something more impo'tant than your frivolous affections. Terry can let the mate bring the Undaunted home and I'll send him word to meet me in New York next week. Do you reckon I'm going to waste that boy in a tow-boat? If Amos Runlett begins buying pieces of Wetherell vessels, I aim to beat him to it. And if he starts to sell some of it on his own account, as Terry intimates, to bear

the market, I'll snatch the stuff so quick that it will make his head swim."

"But what in the world is it all about?" was the natural query of Ivy Belle.

"I am willin' to pay to find out, child. Amos Runlett is not in business for his health. When he begins to juggle with the Wetherell fleet, he just naturally expects to clean up on his own account. I was honin' for some excitement and here it is."

Ignorant of all this plot and counterplot, which his own affairs had set in motion, Captain Dudley Fenwick had made his offing and was standing well out to give Cape Hatteras a wide berth. During brief intervals of leisure he wrung more details from Peter Strawn and was enabled to fill in the bare outline of the story. The sailor at the wheel listened greedily, every word to be treasured and carried forward. The reappearance of Mistah Strawn was regarded as uncanny, to be discussed with awe.

It was soon discovered, however, that he was very much in the flesh as a first mate and they ceased to grumble in public. He obtained prompt obedience without enforcing it, although he no longer worked among the men, leaving this to the second mate who was of the drudging, amiable kind, a conscientious nonentity. Fenwick was pleased to note that good-humor had been restored and he laid it to the grim earnestness of Peter Strawn.

There was trouble brewing beneath the surface,

more serious and menacing than Fenwick had imagined as possible. It was ridiculous, in a way, a grotesquely distorted idea of justice and retribution, aimed not against the master of the ship, but designed to harm the man in Portland who was believed to own her. It was another link in the chain of consequences which Amos Runlett had unknowingly forged to hang about his own neck.

Impulsive and simple children of the sea, these sailors had come under the sway of one of their number, Gus, the black disturber, so careless with a knife. His resemblance to a camp-meeting exhorter was more than skin-deep. The African in him was almost undiluted. He was all emotion, wholly illogical, gifted with a perfervid eloquence when under the spell of some strong excitement.

If Peter Strawn had rejoined the ship as second mate, instead of first, he might have sooner discovered that some deviltry was afoot. He had worked shoulder to shoulder with some of these men through several voyages and very little escaped him. Promotion had now set him more apart, and during his watches on deck he remained aft in charge of the ship, anxious to master his new duties, modestly distrustful of his ability.

Alfred, the cook, was the man who should have been first to warn the after-guard. He lived near the forecastle, the men ate on deck during the fine weather of this voyage toward warmer latitudes, and often

they loafed outside the galley door. He held them in good-natured contempt, however, and paid no attention to stray bits of talk, overheard by chance, which were weightily significant. In fact, his own fatal weakness for conversation was helping to bring the mischief to a head. He was a leaky sieve of a man, addicted to gossip like a drunkard to his bottle. To set him going, Archie or Sidney had only to inquire:—

“Cap’n Fenwick don’t own no piece in this yere vessel, do he, Alfred?”

“Nary a rope or a plank in her,” was the unhesitating reply. “Last time we laid in Portland I asked him in a friendly way was he a owner yet, and he said no, but he had expectations, or words to that effect. There was nothin’ doin’ while we waited at Norfolk, or he’d ha’ told me, probably. Yes, it’s safe to say Cap’n Fenwick ain’t rightly entitled to draw a dividend.”

“This yere Amos Runlett pusson owns her hisself? What’s yo’ understandin’ about that, uh?”

“It’s commonly reported ashore,” babbled the cook, “that he has more money in the Elizabeth than in the other Wetherell vessels. That’s what stuck in my crop when he behaved so ungrateful about us salvagin’ her for him like we did. ‘T ain’t like she was insured up to the handle, for he did n’t carry a penny on her, accordin’ to what I hear. Him and the Wetherell estate take care of their own risks.”

“Huh! Set that ol’ he-pirate back some, Alfred, if

he done lose her. Make him sorry he act like he did an' cheated us men out o' our big money."

A harmless chat like this, a welcome respite from washing dishes, and Alfred would again plunge his fat, bare arms into the hot water and sing:—

"Shiver my timbers, avast and belay,
And other queer things that the sailor-men say."

Tranquilly, unvexed by gales or cold or fog, the great schooner floated farther out into the Atlantic, all her wings outspread, released from the battering servitude of the northern coast. There was no hardship in the day's routine nor the shivering misery of night watches when the spray froze as it fell.

"It may have been partly the weather that made the men growl and hang back," said Fenwick to Peter Strawn. "They are worn out after a long winter of it. The wonder is that you can get niggers to stay the year through in our trade. There is no rougher seafaring in the world than these big schooners endure from October to April."

"Deep-water sailors would call it hell-and-repeat," glumly observed Peter. "They make me laugh. Always afraid of a lee shore. Nervous as cats if they're less than a hundred miles from land. The French bark that picked me up was comical. The skipper called me a liar when I told him what we did with a ship four times the size of his. Those niggers for'ard? They're frisky enough. Funny, though. At first they thought I was more'n half ghost. Ducked if I went

near 'em after dark. They have got over that. I don't know why, but I'm keeping an eye on 'em. Too bad this second mate of yours is a lump of putty."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Fenwick, sensitive to criticism. He disliked the implication that he had been lacking in vigilance. It was his business to know and feel the temper of the ship.

"I said I could n't make it out, sir. They are too good to last. Every man jumps at the word. I expect it in my watch, but they seem as anxious to break their fool necks for the second mate. You'd think they'd ride all over him."

Fenwick flattered himself that his own influence and spirit of discipline had something to do with it, but Peter Strawn bluntly ignored him. It was because the mates were directly responsible for the conduct of the men.

On this same day Alfred enjoyed a few minutes of leisure on deck and again Archie and Sidney pleasantly accosted him. As fellow castaways he had a certain liking for them, and they had always been sprightly and obliging in small ways. His idle thoughts had turned to young Cap'n Fenwick's sensational romance in Norfolk. It had made Spring Haven folks sit up and take notice, and Alfred was rather proud that he had been first to break the news while visiting his cousins once removed. He took it for granted that Cap'n Fenwick had made more headway during this latest trip to Norfolk, and whenever

the skipper went ashore it was, of course, to spend the blissful hours with the rich and beautiful daughter of Cap'n Joe Dabney. He was therefore in a mood to impart information as an authority when Sidney asked him:—

“Is the Cap'n so crazy to sail fo' this yere Runlett man? Ain't Amos Runlett beat him out o' his big money, same as he done us? You comes from down eas', Alfred, an' we No'folk niggers ain't got no way of findin' out things. What for Cap'n Fenwick stay in this hooker, workin' fo' a man that rob him right an' lef', uh?”

“Amos Runlett ain't as bad as that,” mildly objected the cook. “The Cap'n expects him to settle some time or other. These magnates and plutocrats is built different from us poor sailors, Sidney. Our money comes hard and goes easy. The easier it comes rollin' in to them, the more it hurts to be pried loose from it.”

“Cap'n Fenwick is too sof'-hearted an' believin',” put in Archie. “This yere pisen p-plu-plutocrat,—goodness me, that is sho'ly a fightin' word to call a man,—what it mean, anyhow? You hear me, he ain't never gwine pay nuthin' to nobody.”

“Well, as soon as Cap'n Fenwick feels certain of that,” confidently explained the cook, “he'll just up and quit this schooner so fast you can't see him for dust. He should worry. The job is all waitin' for him,—gilt-edge, lemme tell you,—and it won't be

many years before he'll be the biggest tow-boat man south of Sandy Hook."

"He done tied hisself up with Cap'n Joe Dabney?" grinned Sidney.

"Th' fines' white man in No'folk," affirmed Archie. "Never ketch him hollerin' 'bout money. You don't hear nobody cussin' him fo' a p-plutocrat. Cap'n Fenwick has suttinly lit plumb on his feet."

"Bein' skipper of a schooner is bound to look triflin' to him, buddy," was Sidney's verdict.

The brothers walked away and joined the group of sailors who sprawled upon the forecastle roof during the first dog watch. That night they listened again to Gus, the black fanatic, who rocked to and fro upon his sea-chest and told them what to do. The isolation from others of their own kind, the one continual topic of discussion with nothing to divert them from it, had bred a spirit morbid and a little mad. Of all the baser passions, hatred and the desire of revenge are the most responsive to suggestion, the easiest to arouse, and Gus was an artist at this unholy task.

"What fo' you niggers want to go back to No'folk?" said he, the voice subdued but resonant. "White man got no use for you a-tall. He takes yo' wages an' kicks yo' aboa'd a schooner. You don't own nuthin' but th' rags on yo' backs, an' a sailor is low-down trash even amongst decent colored folks. If you get sand in yo' gizzards, go somewhere else an' start right. There's places where a smart nigger is good as

a white man an' a heap better. If you persists in goin' to sea, plenty vessels in these yere West Indies has colored mates an' skippers. What chance you got of bein' more'n a fo'mast hand out o' No'folk?"

From one of the bunks came the rather plaintive objection: —

"You ain't married, Gus. Three of us has women an' chillun ashoe'e."

"Send an' git 'em when you has 'stablished yo'self, Henry. Raise 'em free an' equal, learn 'em to hold up their hails. What ol' Virginia ever done fo' you?"

"Does you plan fo' us to be a colony somewherees, Gus?" asked another.

"Suttinly not. Bimeby, p'raps we kin go visitin' each other. We land on one o' them islands an' we scatter. You-all saved yo' money las' trip like I tol' you. Bound to be some owner's money in th' cabin. It belongs to us. Ain't we four niggers earned it in th' yawl when we was adrif' from this schooner an' brung her into port?"

Archie rolled out of his bunk and stood in the middle of the floor, earnestly declaiming: —

"Losin' this vessel to spite ol' Amos Runlett is mighty agreeable to me an' buddy. We done save it fo' him once. This time we gwine *lose* it. We stand in, Gus, long as it don't do no harm to Cap'n Fenwick. Alfred done satisfied us on that p'int. The cap'n won't be lef' on the beach beggin' somebody to give him another ship, and he don't own no piece

in her. He better get rid o' this hoodooed packet. But look here, Gus, you go spillin' any white man's blood in th' Elizabeth Wetherell an' Sidney an' me will light on you all spraddled out. We ain't scared o' yo' knife. You may be a fractious nigger in No'folk, but that ain't gwine to stop us tearin' you limb from limb."

"Yes, suh, I'se bad right through down to mah soul," admitted Gus, as a matter of fact and record, "but I lives up to mah agreements. I ain't no sneakin' Amos Runlett. Now, lemme tell you some more 'bout the islands down this way. When you ever gwine git a chance like this ag'in? You-all is smart men, able an' willin', or you could n't sail in no big Wetherell schooners. Plenty vessels tradin' amongst th' islands, Cuba, Jamaica, all along to Barbadoes, jes' lookin' fo' you, — summer all th' time, nobody hustlin' an' drivin' an' cussin'. You kin own a house an' a piece o' ground. Women all smile sweet at smart American colored man. I done been in all these yere places. What for I come back to No'folk a-tall? To git mah gal. She done run off to Savannah with a slim yaller coon. You know me, boys. I made it mah business to meet up with 'em. They was sho'ly sorry fo' their sins. You kin bet there was one slim coon what won't never fool with other men's gals no mo'."

"How come you kep' yo' hands off Amos Runlett las' trip in Po'tland, Gus?" ventured the bow-legged, elderly seaman with the gray in his wool. "You

knowed it all right that we was cheated out o' our big money."

"They don't lynch no niggers down eas', man, but they is mighty glad of a chance to hang 'em accordin' to law. Them people freed th' slaves, but they ain't had no use for 'em since."

Peter Strawn was prowling forward under cover of darkness. The three men of the watch on deck who had no work to do were at the open forecastle hatch, and a murmur of voices came from within. One of them coughed as the mate approached, and silence followed, then a burst of laughter, the music of a mouth-organ, and the shuffle of bare feet in jig-time. At this hour of the evening the watch below was usually asleep.

Thoughtfully the mate strolled to the other side of the deck where the engineer leaned against the bulwark. He was an undersized, nervous man who had been in steamers until now. It was a pleasure to glance into his engine-room, the walls spotlessly white, the brass gleaming like gold, the dynamo humming in a corner, the pump throbbing at its nightly stint, an hour or so to keep the ship dry when riding deep with coal.

"Warm below, chief?" said Peter Strawn. "Your room is too close to the boiler in weather like this."

"I don't mind that, but it's too near the fo'castle," was the irritable reply. "I have to snatch my sleep when I can get it, with my own stoking to do, and

the winches in service every time these lazy mokes have to handle a rope. There's nothing but the width of the machine-shop between me and the crew."

"Disturb you, do they? Too bad you can't berth in the other house, with the cook and second mate."

"That is impossible, Mr. Strawn. I have to be on duty all the time, as you might say. The darkies did n't bother me at first. It's worse since we left Norfolk this trip. Chucked up sleep altogether, they have. At least there's always two or three awake and gabbin' away at forty knots. It comes to me through the bulkheads, an infernal mumble-jumble."

"Any idea of what it's about, chief?" was the quiet interrogation.

"Not a word, Mr. Strawn. It's just an exasperating noise all night, like listening to a dynamo with loose bearings and no way to fix it. I'm one of your light sleepers, and with anything unusual I fidget like a cat in a strange garret. I mentioned the matter to the second mate and he told me to swear off coffee at night."

"He thought the men might resent it, chief. Fo'castle rights. Touchy business, to interfere unless they are disorderly. Surest way to turn a sailor ugly is to belay his jaw-tackle. It's curious, this eternal powwow that bothers you. Never saw niggers that did n't love to sleep. Good crew, too. No grievances. Religious revival? Prayin', do you suppose? They do get hipped that way."

"That sooty, spindle-shanked swab of a Gus looks the part," said the engineer, "but he has done time in a chain-gang, or I miss my guess."

"Any fair excuse and I'll spoil his mug for him," replied Peter Strawn, who seldom used violence. "The skipper got on well enough with him in the open boat. Gus has warped somehow since then. Do me a favor, chief. Pussy-foot it into the machine-shop and get wind of what the palaver is about. Not now, for they know I'm hanging around."

"What's wrong, Mr. Strawn? I am alone in this for'ard house with ten of 'em, remember."

"Nothing wrong, so far. Do as I tell you, and if you hear anything worth reporting aft, pass it along to me or the old man."

The puny engineer looked woe-begone, for he was not a valorous person and he had lived at close quarters with white men in other ships. In the starlight the immense length of the schooner's deck oppressed him as he gazed aft at the glimmer of the cabin windows. The skipper ought to rig a telephone. The steam whistle was the only resource if he should need to summon help. What did Mr. Strawn mean by ordering him to play the eavesdropper? Supposing the sailors caught him with his ear against the bulkhead. Obedience was a habit, however, with this nervous engineer, and he stole below to sit in the doorway of his box of a stateroom and watch the dynamo, the pump, and the gauges.

These accustomed sounds soothed him, but presently, when he kicked off his shoes and crawled into the bunk, there came the annoying buzz and rumble from the forecastle. He thrashed about for some time, then padded softly into the machine-shop and switched on the light. If discovered, he had the pretext of looking for a tool. He made no noise that could be heard beyond the wall, and the door to the deck was closed and locked, but the sailors ceased talking, abruptly, as if at a word of command. The silence was absolute.

The puzzled engineer examined the bulkhead wall, but could find no crack through which the light might have filtered when he switched it on. Did the sailors know he was there? If so, what was their reason for keeping mum?

Mr. Strawn had told him to report what he heard. He would be called a fool for trotting aft to say he had heard nothing. Possibly the men were tired of talking and had dropped off to sleep. He waited a little and tiptoed back into the engine-room. The pump had done its work for the night and he shut off the steam. With the cadenced beat stilled, other sounds became more easily audible, and he was lifting a leg into the bunk when he heard, unmistakably, the monotonous drone of the voices in the forecastle.

Swearing under his breath, he moved into the machine-shop with infinite precaution. A feather could have floated no more quietly. He let the light alone

this time, crouching tense in the darkness. Scarcely had he crossed the threshold when the voices died as suddenly as before. Shivers ran up and down his spine and he felt childhood's terror of an unlighted room. Unseen eyes were watching him for some malignant purpose. It was incredibly foolish in a grown man, but he felt as though something might leap out at him from a corner. Stepping high and wide, he retreated to the deck and hastened aft. There was no more reluctance to report to Mr. Strawn.

As the engineer flitted into the shadowy distance, forgetting to avoid the boom-tackles and falling with a thump, one of the sailors on watch left his position near the foremast shrouds and went to the forecastle hatchway. Puckering his thick lips as if about to whistle, he precisely imitated the cheeping creak of a pulley-block straining in the wind. It was repeated twice, at regular intervals, and a dusky shape arose from below to whisper:—

“What’s doin’, George? We done heard yo’ pipe from th’ other side of the deck. It happened two times. We shut up tight an’ dumb. Why was you warnin’ us-all?”

“Th’ ingineer was snoopin’ like he ‘spicioned us, Archie. Two times he went into th’ machine-shop in his socks after he done put hisself to bed. He paraded mighty shy an’ cautious. I seen his shadder when he passed ‘tween th’ light an’ a sta’boa’d window in th’ ingine-room. When he come back, I could look at

him plain, but he don't see me out yonder in th' dark."

"Um-in, George, that don't make no hit with me. What you reckon done put notions in his haid?"

"Mistah Strawn, he was projectin' around this evenin' and had speech with th' ingineer. That Injun mate is a bad actor, believe me, when you start him goin'."

"Wait a minute. Lemme tell Gus. Looks to me like th' lid is liable to blow off."

"You better had tell Gus," anxiously muttered George. "Th' ingineer man did n't stop for nuthin' last time he come out of th' machine-shop. He jes' beat it aft like he had business on his mind. Eight bells ain't struck yet. Mistah Strawn is on deck."

Gus shoved his head out, teeth and eyeballs visible in the gloom. Hurriedly the information was conveyed to him and disgustedly he replied:—

"Too soon to lose this ship like I showed you on th' chart. We can't sink her. How we gwine scuttle a vessel jam full of coal to the hatches? Nobody can git down in th' hold. Plenty o' reefs to break her back after we sets the white men adrif' in the launch. We ain't hauled in for th' Wind'ard Passage yet. We is plumb out in the Atlantic Ocean. How you 'spect me to find a reef to bust her on?"

"Steer till you bang into 'em," suggested George. "Sou'west is bound to fetch her into that mess o' islands down yonder."

"Well, I ain't pleased to have mah plans mixed up by no runt of an ingineer," declared the terrible Gus. "He's only guessin'. He don't know nuthin'."

"P'r'aps he don't, but he's behavin' like he did. An' he's liable to make Mistah Strawn put his nose to the groun' like a lop-eared houn'-dawg on a hot trail. That Injun man kin *smell* trouble."

"Let it rest, boys, till mawnin'," decreed Gus. "Cap'n Fenwick won't let the mate start no rumpusin' without he investigates."

During this conference the engineer had bolted into the cabin, out of breath, afraid of a scolding, Peter Strawn at his heels. Fenwick came out of his room, yawned, hitched up his pajamas, and demanded an explanation. The engineer plucked up heart to say:—

"It was Mr. Strawn's strict order, Cap'n, if you please, sir. Those niggers gave me the creeps and I'm not ashamed to confess it. When the second mate turns out, there'll be only me and the cook at the other end of the ship, half a mile away from you. And a fat old grandfather of a cook is no consolation, seeing as I am far from being a husky man myself."

He related his experience, with nervous gestures, his voice shriller as it went on. Fenwick bade him be quieter lest the man at the wheel overhear. Peter Strawn grimly commented:—

"He did n't dream it, Cap'n Fenwick. I wish there

was more to lay hold of, but the men have framed up something.”

“Mutiny?” exclaimed Fenwick, amazed but not incredulous, for Peter was no man to pursue a will-o'-the-wisp.

“What else, sir? It goes through a crew like smallpox, sometimes. ‘Specially when they are all of the same breed. These men have sailed together, off and on, for years.”

“Trouble with them in one of these well-found schooners, on a short voyage? There is no kicking them about. They have had no rough treatment.”

“It’s not that, sir. There’s one man for’ard that you ought to let me treat rough. He is so much black poison.”

“Gus? I wanted to let him go at Norfolk,” replied Fenwick, “but I can’t forget, of course, that he was in the yawl with me and helped work the vessel in.”

“I’d try to forget it, sir, if I were you. Remember the schooner Herbert Buck? A nigger crew killed the captain, his wife, and both mates off Barnegat. You have heard old skippers talk about it. Nothin’ much to start with. One mean son of a squid like this Gus got ‘em goin’.”

“I used to hear the yarn of the Herbert Buck,” said Fenwick. “It was hard for me to understand how such a thing could happen.” He turned to the engineer, who had found a chair and was bashfully hiding the holes in his socks. “There was a warning signal

of some kind, chief? No doubt it came from the deck. Gus is in the second mate's watch. He must have been below."

"He was, Cap'n Fenwick. There is always more talking then. This Gus has a heavy voice. I can tell it. Reminds you of sawin' on a big bass fiddle."

"I'll make him play a different tune on it," growled Peter Strawn.

"I am not disputing your judgment," observed the master of the vessel, "but it is flimsy evidence, you will agree. We can't put the men in irons for talking when off watch. Send Gus aft before breakfast. I'll talk to him, if he is so fond of it."

"Right enough, sir. Diplomacy is the stuff. Put it to him straight that you'll beat his brains out if he keeps the engineer awake another night."

This failed to satisfy the timorous engineer, who feebly objected:—

"Do I go back there and listen to 'em plot to cut my throat from now till daylight?"

"You certainly do, chief," sternly answered Fenwick. "Lock your doors, if you like, and keep a slice-bar red hot. Toot the whistle every half-hour if it will make you any happier. Mr. Strawn and I will be on deck through both watches."

CHAPTER XI

THE AMAZING MUTINY

THE advice to blow the whistle had not been spoken seriously, but the engineer was in no jesting humor, and inasmuch as fear had banished sleep he proposed to let the captain know that he still lived. At the first blast the sailor on lookout in the bow ran to the engine-room door, but found it closed and rattled the knob in vain. This was odd, and he stood rubbing his head until Captain Fenwick came forward and sent him back to his station, offering no reply to his sputtering questions. Half an hour later the man at the wheel jerked the clapper of the bell in front of the binnacle and the lookout at the other end of the ship repeated the strokes on the larger bell. Promptly the wail of the whistle again informed the deck that the engineer moved and breathed.

This was enough to turn all hands out of the fore-castle. They consulted in troubled undertones, referring the matter to Gus, who felt uneasy, but could not afford to show it.

“Somethin’ wrong with his ol’ whistle,” said Gus. “He’s tryin’ to fix it.”

“Talk sense, man,” scoffed Sidney. “Twice she blow when the bells say what time it is. Looks to me like you had slipped a cog somewhere, Gus. What

you s'pose th' ingineer tell Mistah Strawn? All of 'em been pesterin' to an' fro, th' old man hisself an' both mates. 'Pears to me they is too slick fo' you."

"Mind yo'self, boy," retorted the leader. "What you know 'bout losin' a vessel? Who learned you how? I ain't sayin' what I did aboa'd a three-master in the Gulf one time. I ain't sayin' nuthin'. P'r'aps she was repo'ted missin' with all hands."

This direful hint silenced Sidney, who was no pirate at heart, and the crew huddled together near the foremast, those who were off duty unwilling to return below. Peter Strawn came upon them swiftly, silently, an iron belaying-pin held behind him as the only weapon within reach. It had been a mistake, he realized, to postpone action until morning. The engineer and his alarm whistle had hastened the crisis. Peter was not quite certain of this, but he proposed to find out. Captain Fenwick was too slow to suspect his men of treachery. He had mostly sailed with white crews, steady-going down-easters, not with these emotional children who had never grown up.

"Who roused out all hands?" said Peter Strawn, noting that the group comprised the whole forecastle company, excepting the helmsman and lookout.

"Air mighty hot down below, suh," answered Gus, as the official spokesman. "Wind dead aft. Whistle blow an' we scrabble up to look an' see."

The accents were respectful enough, but the group began to rearrange itself, the others shifting so that

Gus stood in front of them. He dared not weaken his authority by making himself less conspicuous. Peter Strawn stepped closer to him and exclaimed:—

“You belong in your bunk. Go to it. And take the rest of your watch with you.”

“Mo’ comfortable to sleep on deck in a Wes’ India voyage, suh. No mate ever done drove me below when I sailed down yere befo’.”

This came so near to refusing an order that the mate perceived the advisability of calling the captain. The symptoms were ominous, but pride got the better of his judgment and the Indian in him rebelled against letting this worthless dog of a Gus get away with his insolence. Squelch him in time and possibly the other men might listen to reason.

“Hands up, Gus,” was the final word. “Take ‘em out of your pockets. Make a dive for that hatch or I’ll throw you in.”

“You won’t throw nuthin’ but bluffs,” was the defiant retort. “You put on airs like you was a white man yo’self.”

The spark had been touched to the fuse. Shouting a call for help, Peter Strawn swung the iron pin. The record of Gus as a bad man would have ended then and there, but a rope unseen in the darkness deflected the weapon and it struck a glancing blow, seeming to bounce from the darkey’s solid skull. He dropped and rolled over, stunned for the moment. The plans for a bloodless mutiny were disastrously upset.



"YOU PUT ON AIRS LIKE YOU WAS A WHITE MAN YO'SELF"

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Two or three of the men hung back, but the others, thinking they must go through with it, rushed at the mate to disarm him.

Fenwick charged on the run, but as he passed along the narrow space between the cabin-house and the rail, the helmsman deserted the wheel and raced after him. Forgetting him as a foe in the rear, the captain was knocked aside, almost plunging overboard, and the revolver flew out of his hand. There were no other firearms in the cabin.

The methodical second mate, undecided which call of duty to answer, chose to jump to the wheel and lash it before the ship should yaw wide of her course. As a reënforcement he, therefore, arrived too late to launch an offensive. Peter Strawn and Fenwick had surged into the thick of it with no thought of surrender, but the odds were nine to two. They went down and bobbed up again, unable to fight clear, smothered by weight of numbers. With more or less concerted action, the men were shoving, hauling them aft, like the mass formation of a football game.

Peter Strawn raged like a pinioned bull. Fenwick came to the surface of the scrimmage with both fists flying and lost his footing again, with a pair of arms locked around his knees. It impressed both officers as peculiar that no attempt was made to kill or cripple them, and that the sailors fought without weapons. They were a muscular, active lot, and it was easily within their power to drag the pair of white men to

the rail and throw them overboard. One of the assailants set his teeth into Peter Strawn's hand and forced him to drop the iron pin, but otherwise the gore was spilled from bloody noses. The second mate endeavored to penetrate the whirling mêlée, but had to dance about the fringe of it, unable to distinguish his friends, until the momentum of the mob swept him into a scupper.

It was really an inglorious affair, jarring all pre-conceived notions of mutiny at sea. Of course, as is well known in salt-water fiction, the captain usually cows them from the break of the poop, with a pistol in each hand and a few well-chosen remarks. Likewise, one or two dauntless spirits aft will invariably quell the most turbulent forecastle mob. Now and then, however, fiction being stranger than truth, the said mob firmly declines to be quelled. Dudley Fenwick failed to measure up to the traditionally heroic standard, perhaps, but the upheaval was as difficult to comprehend as if it had occurred among the elderly carpenters who puttered about his father's shipyard.

The wildly entangled conflict eddied along the deck, past one mast after another. It spilled over a cargo hatch and rebounded from the wooden cover of a winch. It crashed against the rail and tripped on the sheet-blocks. His shirt torn off and one eye closed, Fenwick did all that one good man could do in the way of damaging his opponents, while Peter

Strawn should have been gratified with his own private casualty list.

They were within a few feet of the coach-house, or forward entrance to the cabin, when one of the men extricated himself and pulled the door open, fastening it back with a hook. Fenwick was too busy to perceive this stratagem and, with a yell, he was plucked loose from the sailor whom he was earnestly trying to throttle and hurled headlong into the vestibule. On top of him came Peter Strawn as if shot out of a gun. They slid across the linoleum and bumped down the brass-bound staircase in what was very close to a dead heat. The stout storm-door was slammed above them and held until it could be secured with nails.

There came the sound of a muffled thump beyond the transverse wall of the cabin, and Peter Strawn, holding his jaw in his hand, muttered thickly:—

“There goes the second mate. They tossed him into the lazaretto, among the spare sails. I hope to God he broke his neck.”

Fenwick grunted, but offered no comments. Most of his teeth seemed to be loosened and his nose had collided with a ring-bolt. Concisely his comrade summed up the situation for him in these appropriate words:—

“The — — — sons of — — —. I will be — — ! — — — 'em! What do you think of the — — — — — ?”

“You said it for me, buddy,” Fenwick managed to

quote, with a feeble grin. For the life of him he could n't see why, but he wanted to laugh at Peter Strawn. There was something absurd in the whole fantastic performance. To cap it, they heard another uproar on deck, the door flew open, and the cook rolled down the stairs like a bale of cotton. He still clutched the deck-mop with which he had galloped to join the cause of Cap'n Fenwick. Puffing, apoplectic, he sat on the floor of the cabin, his back against the table, and used language remarkably like that of Peter Strawn, with original embellishments.

"It's a pity you can't cook as fancy as you cuss," said the mate, without jealousy. "Here we are, all sociable. How about it?"

"Whoo-e-e-e!" exploded Alfred, drawing a tremendous breath and fishing for his disrupted suspenders. "'Most lost my breeches, but I never lost my sand. Niggers locked me in, too, but they forgot the galley skylight. I had an awful time scrapin' through, got stuck like a corn-cob stopper in a jug and shed all my buttons. Say, Cap'n Fenwick, this is most unusual doin's, ain't it! I dunno as I was ever more surprised in my life and I've seen and witnessed some awful funny things at sea. There goes the engineer again — blowin' the whistle as if it had hysterics. What's the use of wastin' steam? They've got him on the inside lookin' out."

"Our fix, exactly," said Fenwick. "I wish you and the deck-mop could have joined us a few minutes

sooner. Well, they seem to have made a fool of me. I trusted them too far. Hysterics? That's what ails the men — more than deliberate viciousness. Make some coffee on the oil-stove, Alfred, while I overhaul the medicine closet and deal out first aid to the injured."

"Safety-pins will fit my case, Cap'n. Fallin' down stairs seldom damages me more'n a trifle, bein' sort of built for it."

The cook's equanimity adjusted itself as easily to mutiny as to shipwreck, and he was presently in charge of the pantry, whistling the apt refrain of "Captain Kidd, as he sailed, as he sailed." No such blithe disregard of circumstances for Peter Strawn. After bandaging his lacerated hand, he sat glowering at the axe in its brackets on the wall. He would make a thorough job of Gus next time. There was not the smallest doubt in his mind that the three of them could somehow recapture the ship. If Captain Fenwick had no other scheme to suggest, he would break out with that axe and make a few niggers hard to find before they settled his hash.

Fenwick was painfully thrashing it out with himself, angrily condemning his stupidity, ashamed beyond words that he should have been trapped. He, too, would stop at no risk of life to gain the upper hand, but it was senseless to rush at it blindly. The men had no intention of taking their lives. This much had been made obvious during the tussle on

deck. There seemed to be, therefore, no immediate peril, but Fenwick almost wished they had killed him.

The master of a ship bundled into his cabin and kept there, weaponless, his authority broken and derided! His plight was not unique in the annals of the sea. Other masters had fared worse and some of them deserved it. But why should a fate so ignoble have overtaken Captain Dudley Fenwick in the Elizabeth Wetherell? Limping to and fro, he wiped the sweat from his bruised face and burst out: —

“If I could only fathom why they mutinied against me, — there was no real grudge that I know of, — nothing to account for this crazy nonsense —”

Peter Strawn, savage as a caged wolf, interrupted to say: —

“Grudge is against the ship. Get the difference, sir? The ship and the man who owns her. That’s how I dope it.”

This carried to the ears of Alfred in the pantry, and he backed out of the narrow quarters to announce, with some embarrassment: —

“Thinkin’ it over, I wonder if I don’t talk too much. The men seemed interested in how you was gettin’ along, Cap’n Fenwick, and there was no harm in it, far as I could see. They asked me if you owned the vessel and could you find another job if this one slipped out from under. I’m awful sorry if I spilled the beans.”

"You have left a trail of spilled beans from here to Spring Haven," replied Fenwick, without malice. "And so you helped stir up this feeling against Amos Runlett, you poor old blunder-head. If you were n't such a good shipmate I'd wipe the cabin floor with you."

"It 'ud be perfectly right and justified, Cap'n," cheerfully agreed the culprit. "The tongue is a foolish nember and hung in the middle, as saith the Holy Scripture."

"If my hand was n't crippled, I'd jam that jaw of yours so tight it would stay shut," declared Peter Strawn who brooded death and destruction.

"No more of that," warned Fenwick. "This is all up to me. We are safe enough for the present. The schooner has plenty of sea room and they can't possibly strand her. I doubt very much if they will dare to set her afire, whatever their addled notion may be. They are too far from land, for one thing, to be willing to take a chance in the launch, and a blazing ship might attract notice before they could get far enough away from her. Better get what rest you can, in two-hour tricks, and we'll try to smash out of here to-morrow."

A few minutes later they heard the noise of a winch and a rattle and thump of blocks on deck. Either the engineer had been frightened into obedience or Archie had taken his place. The altered motion of the vessel told Fenwick that she had been hauled on the

wind and he studied the tell-tale compass suspended from the cabin ceiling. Then he spread out a chart and found that the new course would strike the eastern end of Haiti unless a shift of wind or cross-currents should confuse the men's dead-reckoning. Thus far the weather had been so favorable that they might have gained a fair idea of the ship's position by means of the taffrail log. Evidently they had decided to run away with her, and there was no urgent need of haste to plot and execute a scheme of recapture.

Soon after sunrise the after cabin door was cautiously unfastened from outside and a brawny sailor stood guard with a three-foot length of iron pipe held ready to smash the first head that appeared while he shoved in a basket of breakfast and shouted down the stairs: —

“Mawnin', Cap'n! Hope you did n't hurt yo'self las' night. You don't have to feed on no canned goods. Hot biscuits an' ham-an'-aiggs fo' all hands.”

Fenwick darted for him, but the door slammed and the iron pipe smote the edge of the roof with terrific force. Here was another vacation for Alfred, but he seemed ungrateful, preferring an open boat to imprisonment. Peter Strawn's temper had not improved. He was for cutting through into the lazaretto at once, releasing the second mate, and making a finish fight of it. Fenwick was able to convince him, however, that even four of them were at a hopeless disadvan-

age in breaking out of the cabin so long as the crew remained vigilant and well-organized.

“They are bound to get slack,” said he. “They can’t help it. I hope you stretched Gus cold, Peter, but if you did n’t I am sure he can’t hold them together for twenty-four hours. They have been losing sleep ever since we sailed, and to keep this scheme going they must be awake all the time. Figure it out for yourself. A man at the wheel, another in the engine-room, a third in the galley. At least four to stand sentry over the cabin doors and skylights. That accounts for seven of them. Gus may be up and about, but he won’t be anxious to mix it up again. Two men for a deck watch, and there you are. If they have to tack ship or we run into a squall of wind, we’ll boil out of here in a jiffy. If the fair weather holds through the day, leave it until dusk or a little later. Knock that table to pieces and save the hardwood legs. I would n’t ask for a handier club.”

“What about the second mate, sir?” suggested Peter Strawn.

“If you try to chop through the bulkhead, they will know what you are up to and put him in a safe place for’ard. Let him stay where he is until we can yank him out through the hatch.”

“That second mate is a kind-hearted man,” chimed in Alfred, “and I’m well acquainted with his folks, but he ain’t as ferocious as some.”

On deck the ten mutineers were beginning to realize that the free and lawless life was not all that fancy had painted. Gus had revived and was in command of the schooner, his manner loud and truculent, an untidy bandage around his head. His authority had been somewhat shaken, however, for to be knocked out by the mate in the first round was scarcely living up to reputation.

Archie snickered and remarked to his brother:—

“If Mistah Strawn comes a-poppin’ out of th’ cabin yonder, what you bet Gus don’t let out one screech an’ climb clear to th’ cross-trees?”

“Gus did n’t have no run for his money, buddy,” disagreed Sidney. “That Injun mate lammed him unexpected. You or me would ha’ been deader’n a mackerel. Man, he *bent* that belayin’-pin on Gus.”

The disciplined, unvarying routine of shipboard had been demolished and they were incapable of fitting it together again. This was the fatal flaw that was bound to thwart their plans. They had been trained to obey an intelligent despotism and they knew nothing else. Gus might swagger on the quarter-deck, but he was ignorant of navigation and belonged in the forecastle. Therefore his opinions were no better than any other man’s, and some of the crew were more competent sailors than he. If he gave an order, it was argued, disputed, opposed. And he was not so formidable as he imagined himself to be. No matter how well they guarded the cabin,

it was a volcano which might erupt and blow them to kingdom come, and they were a long distance from the promised land to which Gus had offered to lead them.

“White men is tamed down mighty quiet. I don’t like that,” said one of the sentries as the day wore on toward noon.

“They got a heap o’ sense,” replied Gus. “Cap’n Fenwick knows when he’s licked. I was n’t aimin’ to start this frolic fo’ two or three days, but Mistah Strawn done crowded me into it.”

“You left th’ crowd right sudden las’ night,” was the unkind comment.

“Shut yo’ map, nigger,” growled Gus, “or I’ll set you adrif’ in a boat with Mistah Strawn. That man twist yo’ scalp right off yo’ haid an’ tie it to his belt.”

“When you gwine set ‘em all adrif’, boss?” was the anxious question of another.

“T’ween now an’ night-time. I reckoned to turn ‘em loose closer to shore, same as I said, but the sea is plenty smooth an’ they won’t take no harm.”

“How you plan to coax ‘em on deck, Gus? Looks to me like you got to go down an’ get ‘em yo’self. They ain’t acceptin’ no polite invitations to stow theyselves in no boat. Drag ‘em out, Gus. There ain’t room for more’n one of us at a time to prance down them stairs. An’ all Mistah Strawn got is a big, sharp axe. Blim!”

“Huh! I has been patient an’ ain’t used mah pistol

yet. Injun niate can't blim me with no axe. I was hurted mighty bad las' night an' I ain't feelin' right. You Geo'ge, an' you Henry, go down an' fetch 'em when I say so."

This caused a spirited debate in which George and Henry voted a vigorous negative. Sooner than have a personal mutiny on his hands, Gus waived the delicate question. The breeze had increased, sweeping across a blue ocean which blossomed with foam and flashed in the sun, steady and strong as a trade wind. The deck sloped more and more to the strain of the towering canvas, and the men gazed aloft a little anxiously, as if waiting for the word to lower topsails. They yelled at Gus, but he was even more anxiously staring through the binoculars at the gleaming cloths of a much smaller schooner which was evidently bound to the northward.

For some reason not yet clear, this stranger suddenly turned and with slackened sheets ran off to intercept the path of the Elizabeth Wetherell. The manœuvre occurred when the two schooners were perhaps three miles apart. There was no change of wind to explain it. For an hour the negroes had seen the other schooner heading to pass wide of them and in the opposite direction. They were seamen and quick to note anything erratic in a vessel's behavior.

When Gus paid no heed to their shouts, several ran aft to join him and to beg for a squint through the glasses. He elbowed them away, his perplexity

tinged with alarm. There was no doubt that the other schooner was steering purposely to come closer. Her errand might be harmless, a request for food or water, or to correct the chronometer, but the mutineers were not in a neighborly humor. It was impossible for them to explain themselves to the satisfaction of any skipper afloat.

"Let her go off a couple of p'ints," grunted Gus, waving a hand at the helmsman.

The *Elizabeth* swung her bowsprit a little more to the eastward. Five minutes later the smaller schooner was seen to bear off at a similar angle. Again the course of the six-master was changed to carry her farther out into the Atlantic. Promptly the other vessel altered her course to correspond, disclosing what was unmistakably a pursuit. The two were no longer moving toward a point of intersection. It was a stern chase before the wind.

"Quit botherin' me 'bout takin' in tawps'ls," cried the bewildered Gus. "Let 'em blow away. What business has that damn little schooner got to run us out in the middle of th' ocean? Who tol' her to come racketin' along an' try to ketch us?"

"If you had n't lost yo' nerve an' turned tail, she might ha' hauled up on her course ag'in," cried Sidney, who was at the wheel. "Says he, 'it looks pow-erful strange to me, — great, big Wetherell schooner skedaddle like Bre'r Rabbit when a little coaster tries to act sociable an' pass th' time o' day.'"

"Yes, indeed, we suttinly is a mos' sociable outfit," sarcastically retorted Gus, still fidgeting with the glasses. "Six or seven hours o' daylight left an' that little schooner sailin' like she was greased. In ballast, too, an' trimmed jes' right to lay down to it without springin' her sticks. We got too much coal aboa'd to travel spry."

"A leetle mo' coal, Mistah Fenwick," chuckled Sidney.

"On the wind once mo', you triflin' nigger, an' git them sails to drawin'," grunted Gus.

Running before it, most of the huge fore-and-aft sails were becalmed by those nearest the stern, and the pace of the big schooner was sluggish. The small, black three-master was rapidly overtaking her. With the wind abeam again, however, the stately Elizabeth felt the pull of every yard of canvas that tugged at the bolt-ropes and her bows tore the seas aside. A spirit of panic was spreading among the men. Guilty consciences had made fugitives of them and there was no master mind to direct this monster sailing ship now driven so hard that she might get beyond their control. They fled blindly, as if this pursuing vessel had signalled, "Stop, thief!"

CHAPTER XII

WESLEY AMAZEEN GIVES CHASE

SHORTLY before the smaller schooner had first changed course, her skipper remarked to his mate:—

“A walloper of a six-master yonder, Mr. Coggins, bound through the Wind’ard Passage, would n’t you say? One of Amos Runlett’s fleet or I’m seven blankety kinds of a liar.”

“A Wetherell schooner, Cap’n Amazeen,” agreed the mate as he shaded his eyes with a hairy hand.

The lank, sun-dried master of the Anne Dudley gnawed a chew from a plug of Sailor’s Delight, slapped his knee, and mirthfully cackled:—

“What did I read in the shippin’ news of the ‘New York Herald’ just before we left Havana, Mr. Coggins? The Elizabeth Wetherell had chartered to the Government with coal for Guantanamo. And Dudley Fenwick was put in charge of her when she was repairin’ in Norfolk. ‘Fenwick, master,’ was the item I read. Quarrelled with Amos Runlett over salvage, so I heard, but they must have patched it up.”

“That is the Elizabeth, I’m sure,” said the mate. “Most of her sails are new.”

“What’s the matter with sailin’ close enough to see the boy?” replied Captain Wesley Amazeen, home-

ward-bound after discharging his cargo of sewer-pipe. "Dudley is my owner and the squarest youngster that ever trod a deck. 'Sail her on shares,' says he to me, 'and keep my share for yourself.' We'll hail him, Mr. Coggin, and give him a hellish little surprise. Let her go to cross him as he heads."

The aged Anne Dudley had a nimble pair of heels. Israel Fenwick had whittled her model by rule of thumb, shaping the curves with the skill of his own and his father's experienced knowledge. It was artistry surviving from the days when ships were built for speed and beauty as well as cargo. There was a suggestion of the clipper in the handsome lines of the Anne Dudley. Her hull was too finely moulded to stand up without ballast, unlike the Wetherell six-masters with their broad floors and tremendously deep draft.

If Israel Fenwick had known how to build a smart schooner, then Captain Wesley Amazeen knew how to sail one. And such a shouting breeze as this was precisely to his liking. He took care not to drive the Anne too hard, as a rule, for her frame was limber as a whip and to work her seams open meant more labor at the pump. When he first changed his course to intercept the Elizabeth, his topsails were bunched at the mastheads, having been taken in a little earlier.

Presently he observed that the big schooner was paying off to edge farther away from him. This made him curious and aroused his sporting spirit.

No Dudley Fenwick could give him the laugh by trying to play tag with the Anne. Up went the top-sails, hoisted by a lively down-east crew, and she laid over to it with the water hissing along the lee rail.

A few minutes of this and the Elizabeth was before the wind, almost at right angles to her former course. There was no explaining this on the theory of a joke. A skipper of a loaded Wetherell vessel would never waste his time in this fashion unless he were drunk or crazy.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Coggin?" cried Wesley Amazeen, trotting from the binnacle to the weather shrouds, oblivious of his rheumatism. "Dudley can recognize the Anne as far as he could sight her. It looked kind of amusin' at first, but I don't figger it now for a cent."

"He has lit out for the coast of Africa, all right, sir. It's as queer a caper as I ever saw cut at sea."

"Poke a riddle at me and I'll scrabble around to find the answer," snapped the old man. "I guess I can go peltin' off to the east'ard as long as he wants to keep it up. I'll follow him plumb to Africy."

The Anne Dudley was sailing faster than the fugitive six-master. As if perceiving that it was a losing game before the wind, the Elizabeth again shifted her direction and Captain Amazeen shouted: —

"That settles it! He is doing his dumdest to shake us! Haulin' on the wind, Mr. Coggin, and no'th-

east at that, instead of where he was bound to when we first sighted him. Set the main and mizzen stays'ls, and man the pump. Shove her till she cracks and the devil take the hindmost."

Besides the captain and Mr. Coggin, there were five men in the crew — a second mate, a cook, and four sailors. They came from Spring Haven or towns near by, men who knew Dudley Fenwick and had sailed for his father. Soon convinced by the evidence of their own eyesight that something was wrong with him and his vessel, they jumped to their work and jockeyed the Anne Dudley like a racing yacht. Wesley Amazeen was the skipper for the job, said they, as with a "Hurrah, boys!" and a pull all together the sheets were sweated in by main strength.

"He hates the idea of lettin' us get to wind'ard of him," shouted the old man, "but he can't help himself. Close-hauled, hey, you big Dutch-bellied walloper of a coal-scow! By the wind, is it? That's right where we live! I'll lay alongside you by sun-down and show you a real schooner."

Stripped to the undershirt, his beard whipping in the wind, he took the wheel himself, too impatient to remain idle. Tough as whalebone, he fought the kicking spokes and refused to luff when a screaming gust knocked the vessel down and she tore through it with a gush of green water on deck.

He was outfooting and outpointing the lofty Elizabeth Wetherell which appeared to be nearer



TOUGH AS WHALEBONE, HE FOUGHT THE KICKING SPOKES

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han two miles beyond his bow. She moved steadily, ndifferent to the surge and weight of the sea which he strong wind was tumbling higher and higher. If he weather should become much rougher, she would gain an advantage which Wesley Amazeen anxiously oresaw, but he swore to carry on while two planks ield together.

An hour later the Anne Dudley was close enough or her crew to study the figures active on the deck of the other schooner. One by one they were counted and discussed. The colored sailors, both watches of them, and clustered aft! Vainly Wesley Amazeen ocussed his glasses and searched for Dudley Fen-vick. He was not to be found, nor was either of his mates visible. This was so ominous that the old man's hands shook and he absently wiped the lenses before gazing again. Unless there was something terribly amiss with the ship, she would be in charge of one of her officers. Slowly Captain Amazeen turned to say, with a bewildered air: —

“Nothin' the matter with my sight, is there, Mr. Coggin? I never was color-blind, but those men ook smoked to me, every mother's son of 'em. Swarmin' over the cabin roof like monkeys, and in possession of the quarter-deck.”

“Right you are, sir. There are no white men about, for'ard or aft. It's not natural. In fact, it's entirely too much for me, on top of her running away from us.”

"Don't be a fool," scolded the skipper. "Now you understand why she turned tail and vainoosed. Those blankety niggers are in control of the vessel. It's as plain as the nose on your homely face. Mebbe they killed all the white men or set 'em adrift. Seems unlikely they'd do such wholesale murder. Well, this is perfectly dreadful!"

"What are you going to do about it, Cap'n Amazeen?"

"You talk like a downright idiot, Mr. Coggin. There's only one thing in God's world for white men to do. Dudley Fenwick is master of that schooner, and this is the Anne Dudley, of Spring Haven. We'll hang to him as close as we can and get aboard somehow at the first chance. Unless the sea moderates I dunno as we can lock horns with 'em to-night. No use tryin' it in a boat. A spell of calm would suit me. Anyhow, she can't lose us in the dark unless we have to take in sail or heave to."

Slowly the Anne Dudley crept ahead until she hung on the weather bow of the Elizabeth, and a few hundred yards distant. The golden sun, slanting toward the western sea, was tinged with red and the banks of fleecy clouds became resplendent. Wesley Amazeen chewed and spat to leeward, diving into the cabin for a nip of Old Medford as an excusable comforter while he worried and schemed and hurled insults at the negroes, who laughed and shook their fists at him.

As he had said, it was out of the question to attempt boarding the big schooner from a small boat, even if the wind should die with the sun. At least two men must be left in the Anne Dudley to handle her while hove to, and the party of five would be helpless to gain a foothold, even if their boat was not smashed against the side or staved by heavy missiles thrown into her from above. Wesley Amazeen's rusty revolver, now soaking in kerosene, had not been fired in years.

The desperate alternative was, with the weather gauge, to let the Anne Dudley drive down against the Elizabeth and all hands scramble over the bulwark at the moment of collision. This had tradition to recommend it, and Wesley Amazeen's own grandfather had both led and repelled boarders in the War of 1812. The seas had not been as rough as this, however, and the privateering crew had certainly been much larger. The vessels, too, had been more nearly alike in size. To let the Anne Dudley, tender with age, go reeling and plunging into the ponderous bulk of the coal-laden six-master was like smashing her against a granite ledge of the Maine coast.

"It will crack her like an egg," said Wesley Amazeen, with a grin, part sorrowful, part wicked, at Mr. Coggin. "Bump just once, and then where is she? There's an almighty heft to these seas and I see no signs of smoother weather."

"It will blow harder to-night by the look of the clouds, sir. There may possibly come a lull and a shift to the south'ard before dark. We'll have to snug down or lose sticks and canvas. The old girl will stand no more punishment."

"And let that stolen schooner walk away from us?" violently exclaimed Wesley, wringing the brine from his beard. "You understand, Mr. Coggins, that if there's one chance in a million of Dudley Fenwick's being alive aboard of her, we've got to hop in among those niggers. Own any deadly weapons, do ye?"

"That old shot-gun under my bunk. I used it for ducks last fall."

"I clean forgot you had it. Load her to the muzzle. Break up some scantlin' for the men. And fetch up a few baskets of that limestone ballast. Spring Haven boys are all eddicated to throw rocks. There's been a feud between the river and the hill gangs for 'most a hundred years."

"Good enough," doubtfully replied the mate, "but if we sheer in close enough to bombard the darkies and drive 'em below, what then? They'll bob up again as soon as the two schooners part company."

"Part company?" thundered Wesley Amazeen. "What's happened to your intellect? You don't act bright. It was sort of hard to decide, but I've made up my mind and you can pass it along to the

men, with my compliments, Mr. Coggin. They may as well say good-bye to the Anne Dudley. We are going to jam her alongside. God rest her poor old soul."

"And try to hold her there with a short turn of a hawser, Cap'n Amazeen?"

"If you like, but it won't do much good. She'll be mostly kindlin'-wood. And I dunno but what it 'ud please Israel Fenwick to see his schooner finish this way instead o' rotting as a hulk at the shipyard wharf."

The mate nodded with a smile of comprehension and went forward to inform the men. Courageously the Anne Dudley was enduring her last racking conflict with wind and wave, shaking herself clear of the water that broke over her bows, staggering and twisting under a spread of canvas which threatened to capsize her. Not a threadbare sail had split, not a worn rope parted. They held together as if it was decreed that Captain Wesley Amazeen's duty should be accomplished.

A little to leeward, the Elizabeth Wetherell swept on with an immense solidity of aspect, but her sailors had become afraid of the weather and were in no mood to leave the topsails hoisted. One at a time they were clewing them in to the mast-heads, sparing only two men to tend a winch. It was impossible to run away from the smaller schooner which thrashed to windward of them as if sailed by a crew of mad-

"Seems like I know that little ol' vessel," uneasily grumbled Archie. "Ain't we seen her in Po'tland, buddy?"

"Sure we has," answered Sidney, who was also low-spirited. "I is obliged to believe she is th' Anne Dudley or th' Mary Fenwick, hailin' from Spring Haven. They was built jes' alike."

"Cap'n Dudley Fenwick owns 'em, too. What kind of magic do he use, Sid, to call his own vessel to him this a-way? I got mali fingers crossed, you hear me! She sails like a spook ship. Blowin' half a gale o' wind, she showin' every rag she kin set, an' rompin' by us like we was tied to a post. It ain't nacheral, buddy boy. Who is that ol' tarrapin that's master of her? I bet he got witch-fires blazin' in his eyes."

Gus had halted near them to glare to windward, attempting a bravado which hid an increasing trepidation. His voice was husky with fatigue as he held a hand to his bandaged head and stormily blurted:—

"Go on about yo' business an' quit such fool chatterin'. Little schooner yonder can't trouble us none. All she kin do is look out fo' herself. Cap'n Wesley Amazeen been drinkin' rum, I reckon. I was layin' alongside him in Pensacola one time. Before break-fas' he mixed his toddy regular an' drunk it under th' awnin'. Made a nigger dry jes' to watch him."

"Pity you ain't got a dram from his jug," contumuously observed Archie. "You sho'ly do need it, Gus. Yo' complexion is turnin' green, an' did n't I hear

yo' knees knockin' together? You won't lose this Cap'n Amazeen. No matter how hard it blow, to-morrer mawnin' you bound to see him right where he is now, tearin' along to wind'ard, tawps'ls an' all. You can't never get rid of him nohow, Gus."

"You know what I think, buddy?" solemnly argued Sidney. "P'r'aps this yere Cap'n Amazeen ain't yonder a-tall? Mebbe his schooner has done foundered with all hands an' he come to ha'nt us, same as other ghost-ships we has heard tell of plenty times. Remember th' pirate brig that is still beatin' past Dead Man's Shoals? I seen her mahself in a fog."

There was nothing ridiculous in the supposition, although Archie dismissed it with a careless laugh. The mystery of the sea, its folk-lore and its legends, lingered among these credulous sailor-men of the big schooners. Certainly there was something uncanny, inexplicable in this episode, and it was not soothing to the nerves of the black mutineers. The sky which the setting sun had painted so gloriously was now darkening with masses of clouds that reflected their sombre hues upon the heaving surface of the sea. It was like the twilight of the tropics which shades swiftly into night. Already the suggestion of dusk blurred the tossing outline of the Anne Dudley, and the spindrift drove over her like a mist. Her canvas, stained gray by weather, blended with the sky beyond. She had become a wraith of a vessel, from which there was no escape.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BRAVE FINISH OF THE ANNE DUDLEY

IN the cabin of the Elizabeth Wetherell the afternoon had seemed less like time than eternity. The three captives were morose and conversation was infrequent. Even Alfred became unsociable and sat by himself in the pantry, reading old newspapers. They passionately yearned for action, but Fenwick was still firmly persuaded that the chance of success would be better toward the end of the day. Occasionally Peter Strawn detonated in brief, lurid comments concerning the ancestry of the ten sailors and their proper destination in the hereafter. His own pedigree indicated that he was rapidly reverting to type. They were given something new to think about when the compass tell-tale informed them that the schooner was no longer pointing for the coast of Haiti, but had veered a little to the eastward. This hinted at indecision or some change of plan.

Soon it was apparent that the negroes had put her before the wind on an aimless track out into the Atlantic. The cabin skylights had been closed and fastened from without and it was impossible to overhear the talk on deck, but some sudden excitement was causing confusion. There was much running about and shouting of orders. Then, for a time, the deck

became quieter, or until they hauled the schooner on the wind and were steering north of east.

It was absurd to imagine them as deliberately homeward-bound or venturing into the more frequented paths of steamer traffic. The motion of the cabin floor, the groan and creak of woodwork, the sounds of the sea against the planking told the prisoners that the *Elizabeth* was laboring under a reckless pressure of sail. This also was unaccountable, for the men would be cautious and timid in the management of this huge craft.

“Something or other has frightened them,” said Fenwick, standing at one of the small, bull’s-eye windows which was fogged with spray. It was in the side of the cabin and he saw only an empty ocean.

“I hope it scares ‘em to death,” growled Peter Strawn.

“Better luck than we looked for,” replied the master of the ship. “They are trying to run away from something. That is easy enough to guess. If it’s a steamer, she ought to be up before long. But how did they manage to let any other vessel come close enough to suspect trouble? They could see her first and there is plenty of wind.”

“Ask me an easier one, Cap’n Fenwick. At this rate the coons will be demoralized. Your waiting game was the wise hunch.”

There were no windows through which they might gaze astern, but the excitement on deck was swelling

and fragments of shouted speech carried into the cabin. It was to be inferred that the Elizabeth Wetherell was not sailing fast enough to please her clamorous crew. Fenwick hung at a window, Peter Strawn at another, and Alfred flattened his nose against a bull's-eye in the pantry.

It was Fenwick who first caught a glimpse of the black, three-masted schooner so gallantly fighting her way to windward. Through the clouded glass he was unable to discern her clearly and the angle of vision was awkward, so that for a time she was difficult to identify. The wind picked up the frothing tops of the waves and blew them across her hull like white smoke. Inch by inch she crept abeam of the Elizabeth and Fenwick comprehended that his wild conjecture was not mistaken. The Anne Dudley and that dare-devil old pirate, Wesley Amazeen, wrestling with the wheel! Yes, there they were, but what help could they offer in a heavy sea and with night coming on?

"Look at him! Oh, look at him," yelled Fenwick, with tears in his eyes. "He'll drive her under before he lets go."

"Wesley never learned how to let go," babbled Alfred. "Ever hear how he —"

"Oh, Lord, the cook is loosened up again," interrupted Peter Strawn. "Stow it, Alfred. We're due to get busy."

"We are!" cried Fenwick, ready for action. "We

won't let Wesley Amazeen find us cooped up like hens in a crate. I don't know what his idea is, but we must beat him to it. He will drown the Anne Dudley before morning if we don't get our schooner back. Watch him just a little bit longer. We'll jump these niggers between daylight and dark."

"Treat 'em rude as we know how?" blandly inquired Alfred.

"Wade in," answered Fenwick. "You can smash their heads if you hit 'em hard enough."

"I'll be surprised if this axe bounces off Gus," declared Peter Strawn.

"If he refuses to quit, let him have it, but look out for a gun."

"Shoot my grandmother! I'll scare that nigger so he could n't hit Alfred, broadside on."

Their exit was to be through the forward door where the small vestibule at the top of the stairs permitted them to stand together and dash out almost simultaneously. The odds against them had become a matter of no consequence. Fenwick went to the window for another glimpse of the Anne Dudley. She was nearer than before and quite shadowy. He said the word to his comrades. They stole up the stairway and Peter Strawn was given room to swing the axe against the door. Nailed fast though it was, he smashed it from the hinges with three mighty blows and Fenwick's shoulder did the rest. The sailor on guard had left his post to stare at the spectral

schooner, and as he ran back at the sound of the axe, the splintered door knocked him flat. The most difficult part of the task had been achieved, to gain the deck without being struck down.

Most of the men were huddled aft, their attention completely absorbed by the Anne Dudley, while Gus harangued them with noisy vituperation. Taken by surprise, they were caught without weapons and in an unready state of mind. There had been too much talk about spook-ships and kindred topics. In the uncertain light Captain Fenwick, the mate, and the cook, coming swiftly and in silence, seemed larger than life-size, more numerous than was the fact.

The audacity of their attack was paralyzing. The sailors were in cramped quarters, in the obstructed space between the cabin and the stern, with the wheel and its long gear-box, the binnacle, the sheet-blocks and tackle. These things they stumbled against or bumped into as the three assailants whirled in among them, clubbing without mercy.

Peter Strawn knocked them over with the flat of the axe, reserving the edge for Gus. Fenwick's opinion of the leg of an oak table was vindicated. It possessed the weight and balance to induce dreamless slumber when applied behind the ear. Alfred preferred the hickory handle of a deck-mop, and with all his beef behind it a man might better have been kicked by a mule.

They were determined first to flail their way to the

small hatch leading into the lazaretto under this deck and rescue the second mate. The concerted rush was successful, and Fenwick thrust aside with his toe the brass hook which secured the hatch. Up flew this wooden lid and the infuriated second officer shot out precisely like a jack-in-the-box. He might be slow to anger, but solitary confinement among the paint-pots and coils of rope had made him as dangerous as Peter Strawn. In his fist was a roll of sheet lead to which he had rigged a bit of tarred rope for a handle. As an impromptu slung-shot it had merit. The first man whom he tapped collapsed in a heap, and this revivified second mate instantly stooped and heaved him into the lazaretto and clapped on the hatch. It was done in a twinkling.

“Hammer ‘em for’ard and keep the crowd on the run!” roared Fenwick. “Watch out for knives. Drive ‘em away from the rail if you can or they’ll snatch belaying-pins as they go by.”

The limber Gus had extricated himself from the thick of it and was warily avoiding Peter Strawn. The latter had not forgotten him, but was otherwise engaged. The sailors were giving ground, two or three of those who were hurt seeking refuge upon the cabin roof. It was no pastime, however, for the men were getting their hands on pieces of iron and lengths of pipe which had been carelessly laid aside. Several were ready and anxious to use their sheath-knives, discarding all idea of a harmless mutiny.

They were convinced that they fought for their lives.

It was partly a retreat, partly a common impulse to find more room that moved the combat to the wide, unhampered deck forward of the cabin. Here it would be easier to surround the officers and pull them down or strike them from behind. But the four raging white men kept together in a kind of intuitive team-play, and with them as invisible allies fought the stern law and traditions of their calling, the inflexible code of the quarter-deck and the forecastle, the relation of master and man. The negro seamen had expected nothing like this. In a childish spirit of revenge they had planned to wreck the schooner, and Gus had deluded them into believing it a feasible undertaking, but now they foresaw the prison and the gallows at the end of the voyage.

Fenwick felt that he had them whipped into submission even before they began to break in the direction of the forecastle. Gus had turned fugitive with Peter Strawn hot after him and death in the glint of the axe. Twice the black desperado wheeled and pulled the trigger of his pistol. Once the bullet went wide, and the other cartridge failed to explode.

It was a duel which had detached itself from the mass. The mate was so zealous in his efforts to square accounts that he collided with a mast. The impact jarred him for the moment, and the negro saw his opportunity. He was about to shoot point-blank

when Fenwick burst out of the crowd and grappled with him, shouting a warning to Peter Strawn.

Gus went down, but as he fell he twisted and fired again, not at the mate, but with the muzzle against Fenwick's shirt. It was impossible to miss the target. The master of the Elizabeth Wetherell relaxed his grip of the negro's throat and lay crumpled on the deck. Gus whooped for joy, demented with the lust of killing, and scrambled to his feet to blaze away at any other white men in sight. Peter Strawn was bending over Fenwick and the negro paused to take careful aim before the cook or second mate should spoil his intention of potting another officer. If he threw away no more shots, he might get them all. Now that he had killed the skipper, he would give them plenty to hang him for. They ought to know better than to crowd him so hard. He was a bad nigger.

The attempt to recapture the ship had occupied only a few minutes, during which Captain Wesley Amazeen was not idle. He had beheld the three white men break out of the cabin, and instantly his schooner was manœuvred to come to close quarters. It required the most adroit seamanship to put her alongside without entangling the bowsprit or smashing too hard and drifting away before they could jump to the Elizabeth. Two men were ready with the bight of a hawser while the others tended sheets. Slowly the Anne Dudley approached until a tumbling sea lifted

her and she rolled against the side of the six-master with a shock that seemed to wrench her planking asunder.

Once more she rolled and seven men leaped across to the other deck which was almost level with their own. The two vessels had crashed together just as Gus was sighting his pistol to finish the business for Peter Strawn. Thunderstruck, he yelled to the other sailors to help him ward off the visit of Captain Wesley Amazeen. They responded with hearts aquake, for only ghosts or devils would board a ship in this fashion.

A volley of limestone ballast smote them with terrific accuracy, and then they were caught between two fires, clubbed and pounded front and rear. Wesley Amazeen was enjoying himself with so much youthful gusto that he failed to notice Fenwick's absence from the fray until he turned aside to avoid the body prone on deck. The shadows obscured it, but Peter Strawn told the old man who it was.

The issue was not in doubt after that. The word spread among the Anne Dudley's crew that the niggers had shot the skipper. They would have dealt out punishment in kind, with no restraint from Wesley Amazeen, but the mutineers had no more battle in them and were scampering for the forecastle to dive below and offer unconditional surrender. Four of them had been stretched senseless and another crawled on hands and knees.

There was to be no surrender for Gus, the instigator of it all. He had emptied his revolver after drilling one of the Anne Dudley's men through the arm and grazing Alfred's bald scalp, and was running for the forecastle in blind terror of Peter Strawn. He was the last man of the lot, however, and the door had been pulled shut by those already below. Into the bow he fled, the remorseless mate pursuing him. Here Gus was cornered like a cat and there was only the massive timber of the bowsprit as a precarious refuge. He crept out, high over the water, and Peter Strawn crept after him. Beyond them soared the jib-boom, a smooth round spar with foot-ropes on either side.

The negro looked back, hesitated, and then resumed his laborious journey, impelled by the fear of death. Peter Strawn drove his axe into the spar and left it there. Both hands were needed. He opened his clasp-knife and held it between his teeth as he advanced along the jib-boom, swaying upon the foot-rope as the schooner rose and fell. The twilight had darkened and the negro was almost invisible as he worked his way toward the outer end of the jib-boom. He, too, had a knife with which he had swaggered before the crew as a man of wicked reputation, but he knew that there was no bluffing Peter Strawn.

It was, indeed, the end of the rope for Gus. Even should the mate spare his life, there were the other sailors to be reckoned with. At the first chance they

would kill him for shooting Captain Fenwick. They had sworn to do it if he harmed the skipper, and now their own lives were in peril of the law. Captain Fenwick was dead, as Gus believed, and he had shot him wantonly while he was trying to protect the mate.

These thoughts moved dimly in the brain of the exhausted negro who was still weak and dizzy from the blow of the belaying-pin. Fear made him tremulous. He swung between the devil and the deep sea. Instead of treading the foot-rope with a sailor's careless ease, he hugged the jib-boom to save himself against the next lurch of the vessel.

Peter Strawn crawled steadily toward him, an instrument of private justice. When they were a few feet apart, the negro cleared his throat and whimpered:—

“Lemme alone, please, suh. You busted mah haid when I had n’t done nuthin’, and you did n’t have no cause to chase me with a axe.”

“Changed your tune, Gus?” said the mate. “Better let go and drop.”

“I gwine take you overboa’d with me, Mistah Strawn. Fishes don’t git me without you go ‘long too.”

Silently the mate worked his way nearer. They were almost out at the end of the long spar, seventy feet beyond the schooner’s bow. In a strong wind it was no pastime to furl and secure the outermost jib with both hands free. Gus shifted his position so

that he faced the mate and gripped the gasket to steady himself. He groaned and slashed wildly with the knife, but missed his mark. Peter Strawn laughed and shouted:—

“Jump and swim for it, you black murderer!”

Again Gus swayed forward to slash at the empty air. The blade swished down and struck the jib-boom. It sheared through a wrapping of the gasket which was passed around the sail. The rope suddenly slackened in the negro's grasp and he pitched headlong, vanishing, blotted out. To Peter Strawn it seemed a long interval before there came up from the sea the faint sound of a splash and a sobbing cry. He peered down at the white water which rushed past the schooner's ponderous stem.

“The old hooker stamped him under,” he said to himself. “Guess she had a grudge of her own.”

A little puzzled by the abrupt departure, he groped along the jib-boom until his fingers closed on an end of the gasket which was cleanly cut. Methodically he tied the rope and made the sail fast, muttering this obituary:—

“Sawed yourself off the limb, Gus. Spared me a nasty job.”

Returning to the deck, he found that Captain Fenwick had been carried into the cabin and was said to be alive. The mate's first duty was to take care of the ship and he ran to the side to get her clear of the Anne Dudley which was still held by the haw-

ser. The two schooners were hove to, their canvas slatting and thundering, the hulls grinding together. Peter Strawn lowered a lantern and perceived that many of the smaller vessel's planks were crushed in above the water-line, and no doubt she was injured below. She had settled much deeper and appeared to be in a sinking condition. Several of her men had jumped aboard and were hastily saving what personal property they could stow in bags and boxes. Captain Wesley Amazeen came out of the Elizabeth's cabin and said to Peter Strawn:—

“You got the nigger, I presume. I really ought to ha' stopped you from takin' the law into your own hands.”

“I did n't have to. He fell overboard, Cap'n Amazeen. It's the truth. I never touched him.”

“Holler any after he hit the water? Did you look for him?”

“He stayed down. I listened.”

“Quite correct, Mr. Strawn. I'll sign and swear to it. The news would disappoint him if he had stayed aboard. He plugged Dudley Fenwick good and hard, but he did n't kill him. Bullet's in him somewhere, but it missed his lungs and vitals, in my opinion.”

“Glad to hear it, sir. What about your own schooner? I'm afraid you croaked her.”

“I cal'lated to,” was the untroubled reply. “It had to be done. Where's Mr. Coggins?”

“On the Anne Dudley. He won’t give her up until he has to.”

“Tell him to abandon the vessel and turn her adrift if she’s stove up bad. I’ll figger out your course for you, Mr. Strawn. Let her rip for Guantanamo and the navy doctors. I’ll be nursin’ Dudley Fenwick. That’s where I belong.”

Without a sigh, although he was sorely grieved to lose the schooner he had sailed for thirty years, Wesley Amazeen betook himself to the cabin. A rough-and-ready surgeon of the old salt-water school, he had set fractures, pulled teeth, conquered fevers, and performed amputations with the meat-saw. The medicine closet was completely stocked and he knew how to clean and drain a wound. Bending over the unconscious man in the bed, he murmured:—

“We’ll fool that infernal nigger yet, Dudley. He can’t douse your glim. You put up a hellish nice scrap and Israel ’ud think mighty well of you.”

Presently the men of the Anne Dudley deserted her and she was released to disappear in the night which mercifully shrouded her last hour. Filled and sinking, battered to death, she had faithfully served those who built and sailed and loved her.

“A good little ship and she finished in style,” said Mr. Coggin as he stared to catch a farewell glimmer of her sails. “No use mourning, boys. You are promoted to a six-master. The darkies are under hatches and you’ve got to work this big brute of a vessel into port.”

He consulted with Peter Strawn and begged him to turn in for a rest. There were enough of them to stand the watches. Peter yawned, dragged himself as far as a sheltered corner of the deck, and fell asleep with his head on his arm. In Alfred's spotless realm the mutineers had left dirt and disorder, and he made a feeble effort with broom and scrubbing-brush, but the cook of the Anne Dudley found him nodding upon a stool, with eyes closed tight, and bundled him into his bunk.

Mr. Coggin endeavored to enter the engine-room, but had to force the door. A puny, pallid man who was sadly feeding the fires brandished a shovel at him and nervously backed away. Reassured, he exclaimed: —

“Those niggers threatened to cut my throat, if you please, unless the steam-gauge showed pressure enough for the winches. I’m sure they meant what they said. And who may you be?”

“Mate of a relief crew. Hit the hay, chief, and I’ll rouse you out when we need the steam.”

“But I can’t sleep, — that nigger called Gus, — he poked me in the stomach with a pistol.”

“He has left the ship. Whereabouts unknown,” gravely answered Mr. Coggin. “There will be no more commotion aboard.”

“I can’t say I enjoy life in these big schooners,” drowsily mumbled the engineer, who was content to ask no more questions.

Through the night the Elizabeth Wetherell drove on her rightful course to gain the Windward Passage and so reach the southern coast of Cuba. When morning came the decks were washed down, every rope coiled in place, and the rigorous routine of a disciplined ship restored.

To Peter Strawn, refreshed and active, the tragic interruption seemed like an evil dream. The annihilation of Gus disturbed him not in the least. Dutifully he wrote a line in the log preceding the quaint old phrase that is still in use, so that the entry read:—

Seaman Gus Henderson lost from the jib-boom. And so ends this day.

He made no mention of the mutiny and recapture of the ship. This was postponed for discussion and advice. Captain Wesley Amazeen appeared on deck at sunrise to glance at the compass and cock an eye aloft. His gait was spry and his voice had a cheerful note as he said:—

“A piping breeze, Mr. Strawn, and a fair day promised. Cap’n Fenwick is restin’ easier than you’d expect. Pulse and temperature real hopeful. He wants to talk, but I shut him up. He asked about the sailors. He don’t seem so terrible bitter against ‘em, exceptin’ Gus.”

“Did you tell him what happened to Gus, sir?”

“No; I judged it wiser to wait. All I told him was that the men were confined in the fo’castle and he

must n't worry a mite. The ship is well manned, says I, and a-hellin' for her destination as peaceful as a Sunday school."

"You are in command, Cap'n Amazeen," respectfully insisted Peter Strawn. "It's your crew and you know your business. I'm not a licensed navigator. Cap'n Fenwick took his own observations."

"I can manage to shoot the sun and fetch where we want to go," grinned the old man. "Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Strawn. I never expected to give orders aboard one of these Wetherell schooners."

"Shall I put the niggers on bread and water, sir?"

"Aye, Mr. Strawn, and a short allowance at that. Some of 'em are hurt. Let 'em come up one at a time and I'll doctor the miserable offspring o' Satan."

They went forward and opened the forecastle door, with two of the Anne Dudley's seamen as a guard. This precaution was unnecessary. One small boy would have been sufficient. The mutineers had repented of their sins and were more in the mood for a prayer-meeting. They crowded to the door, begging for water and fresh air, every one of them bearing marks of the fray, a battered, disconsolate company. One held a broken wrist, another displayed a gash on the head. Those whose cases seemed most urgent Wesley Amazeen attended with surprising skill and expedition. They rolled their eyes in search of Gus, but dared not ask his fate until Archie came out for liniment and plaster.

"Does you mind our inquirin' 'bout Cap'n Fenwick an' the bad nigger what led us-all astray?" he faltered.

"You did n't kill the skipper, but you are all guilty of tryin' to," savagely answered Captain Amazeen. "You men can't squirm out from under by blaming it on this hound of a Gus. The law holds all hands guilty in riots, mobs, and mutinies. Chew on that till we get ashore."

"Yes, suh, we got it to think about 'tween now an' then. If you will be so kind as to let us git jes' one crack at Gus, he won't trouble you no mo'."

"Gus fell overboard and was drowned," said Captain Amazeen, with the faintest flicker of a smile.

"I reckon he was runnin' so fast he could n't stop nissel an' he never had learned to swim nohow," observed Archie, who seemed cheerfully resigned to the loss of a shipmate. "Hones', Cap'n, please, suh, he did n't put out Cap'n Fenwick's lights?"

"Not yet he did n't. You look like a decent, God-fearing man. I don't see what in tarnation got into you. I'd hang the whole crew of you if it was my say-so. Mebbe it'll make you feel worse to know that when Cap'n Fenwick's mind was wanderin' in the night he murmured something about forgivin' them that trespass against us."

"It ain't so, is it, suh?" blubbered Archie, his knuckles in his eyes. "Seems like we was mixed up with a brain-sto'm. All our despitefulness was ag'in'

Mistah Amos Runlett an' his vessel fo' cheatin' us out of our big money."

"That's enough out of you. Throw this man back into the kennel, Mr. Strawn, and haul out another one. It's navy law at Guantanamo, and a camp of Marines ashore. This ship is under Government charter, so I presume these niggers'll be court-martialled and shot as quick as they can line 'em up."

"It's a cinch," said the mate; and Archie groaned in utter despair as he was hustled below to carry the lamentable tidings to his comrades.

Alfred had ambled out to exhibit the bullet-graze upon his bald dome and discuss his narrow escape. Wesley Amazeen, who knew him of old, very dryly remarked:—

"If that bullet had hit you an inch lower, there would n't ha' been nothing whatever to stop it."

"Hollow?" said Peter Strawn. "No, sir. It's solid ivory. His loose talk helped start the row."

"And he did n't mean any harm, of course. Well, in my experience, his kind of folks is worse than a pan o' gunpowder under the kitchen stove. Now, Alfred, you listen to me. As long as I'm in command of this schooner, if you speak one word when you're not spoken to, I'll string you up by the thumbs as a solemn warnin'."

"Aye, aye, sir. I get your meanin' perfectly. It reminds me of Cap'n Joseph Emerton, the cruellest skipper that ever sailed coastwise. A third cousin of

nine was mate with him one time, when he chased a man aloft and kept him there till he frosted his fingers and toes. The same voyage it was that —”

With remarkable strength and fury Wesley Amazeen fell upon this amiable sea-cook and rammed him into his galley, where there was a crash of pots and pans and then a stillness absolutely unprecedented.

The skipper emerged to say: “I’ll cork that fat alkin’-machine if it takes the quart bottle of chloroform in the medicine kit. Apart from his one failin’, you could n’t ask a better shipmate.”

His duties on deck despatched, Captain Amazeen resumed his vigil in the cabin, and a woman could have been no more gentle and tender. Fenwick lay in the wide, four-posted bed of his own room, and an electric fan stirred the air which breathed in, warm and velvety, from the open companionway. He was conscious and suffering pain which the tiny white tablets dulled before it became intolerable. There were intervals when his mind was singularly clear, and he would ask a question or two until the whole sequence of events was logically connected. The rutiny, the plight of his misguided sailors, the loss of the Anne Dudley, and possibly his own death had been foreordained when Amos Runlett sought to evade a just obligation. Even now Fenwick could not believe that there had been a deliberate intent to repudiate it. An unscrupulous business code was

mostly at fault — to get as much and give as little as the letter of the law permitted.

And there was Gus! Wesley Amazeen was trying to conceal the truth, but Fenwick surmised it by now. A good sailor and tractable until this grievance had inflamed him like whiskey. He had to go the long road. Being the man he was, Peter Strawn could not have done otherwise. And the nine sailors? Fenwick was too weak and tired to pass judgment on them, the ethics of the problem were too confusing, but he could not feel hatred for them.

Several days after this, Wesley Amazeen reported that he had sighted the lighthouse on Cape Maysi as a Cuban landfall and would run along the coast under a whole-sail breeze. They were nearing the end of the voyage and Fenwick was tenaciously alive and holding his own. The ghastly pallor was not so pronounced and the wound showed no critical symptoms of inflammation. It seemed restful to him to comprehend that all was well with his ship, but something else disquieted him and interfered with sleep. Wesley Amazeen suspected what it was and suggested: —

“I have kept you from talkin’ much, Dudley, same as they do in hospitals when a man has a slug of lead in his system and is mortally shot up or thereabouts. But those ungodly niggers of yours seem to need hashin’ over — they worry you more’n is healthy.”

“I wish I knew what to do with them, Wesley,” whispered the invalid. “It is easy enough to turn

em over to the naval authorities at the Guant-a-mo Station. Mutiny on the high seas is a Federal offence, and it means long sentences when they are ken home."

"Personally, I'm glad to hear it," cried the vindictive old gentleman.

"But you have n't sailed with them, Wesley. Three in the lot, Archie and Sidney, and the bow-legged dger they call Sambo, were splendid men until us hatched this devilment. And I should be willing to trust them again."

"Certainly — as far as you could sling a bull by the tail," soothingly agreed Captain Amazeen. "I'm anxious to humor you, Dudley, so what's the idea?"

"Can't you work it out for me?" was the restless appeal. "It's hard punishment for them right now. I hammered the stuffing out of them and put them on bread and water —"

"Luxurious treatment, I call it, Dudley. But there's some sense in what you say. They are your villains, not mine, thank the Lord. Want to get rid of 'em? Like to see 'em fade away?"

"Something of that sort, Wesley."

"Cuss their heathen souls. They cost me a seaworthy schooner," scolded the wizened mariner. "And was doing real well with her, salting money away to pay on your account. Well, I guess it's your funeral. Now, shut up and be calm, or I'll have to scare you limb, like I did Alfred. Leave it to me and that able

aborigine, Peter Strawn. Dealing out mercy and such soft qualities will seein dreadful awkward to him."

That night the Elizabeth Wetherell lost the breeze and floated along motionless within a mile of the Cuban coast. Where a small river ran down to the sea through a gap in the rugged mountain wall, the lights of a village twinkled like fireflies. Wesley Amazeen surveyed the peace and beauty of this tropic scene and that grin of his was distinctly malicious. Fenwick's lesson in charity and forgiveness had been wasted on his toughened old soul. Calling Peter Strawn aside he said:—

“Gus painted 'em glowin' pictures of life beneath the palm and the cocoanut tree. They were crazy for it. We will proceed to respect the wishes of the deceased, which is Gus.”

“Maroon the swine, sir? That's not so bad. I hope they starve, but there's some money amongst 'em. Shall I take it away?”

“No. Cap'n Fenwick would n't approve, Mr. Strawn. Some of 'em need doctorin' before they'll be good for anything. I thought I was a flinty snoozer, but you have me beat.”

“It's the best way out for me, I guess,” said the mate of the Elizabeth. “If they turned state's evidence and accused me of putting the boots to Gus, I might be caught in a clove-hitch. They saw me chasing him with an axe, and he never came back.”

"Least said, soonest mended," was the wise reponse. "Pass the word to Archie. He's the boss of he gang. No fuss, or they know what they'll get. 'ut the yawl over and lower the launch. Tow 'em o the beach and say good-bye and bad luck to the st."

It was done very quietly. The unhappy mutineers ad no thought of resistance as they filed out of the forecastle with bundles under their arms and shuf-
led across the deck between the men of the Anne Dudley. Those who walked with difficulty because f injuries were supported by comrades. Peter
Strawn looked at the shadowy procession and his animosity was weakened. There was something pitiful n the episode which touched even him. With most f them he had toiled in all weathers, coaxing them, patient with their infirmities, regarding them as irresposible children of the sea. This he remembered when Archie and Sidney paused in front of him before clambering into the yawl. They snatched off heir cloth caps, respectful as always, and hesitated n deep embarrassment, each waiting for the other o speak, until the mate said: —

"Well, boys, what's the matter? The jungle for 'ours! You wanted it and now you've got it."

"I wish to Gawd we was back ag'in in th' good ol' days aboa'd this schooner, Mistah Strawn," replied Archie, in a broken voice. "Spendin' our wages in No'folk an' signed to sail ag'in."

"You done said it fo' me, buddy," echoed Sidney, gulping over the words. "What we aims to tell you, suh, is please to give our kindes' wishes an' respects to Cap'n Fenwick. We suttinly behaved ourselves like low-down, nigger trash, but we did n't never mean him no harm. He is th' whites' skipper on th' Atlantic coast."

"An' you is a mighty up-standin' mate, Mistah Strawn," was Archie's farewell. "So long, ol' Elizabeth Wetherell. We done saved you once, but you hoodooed yo' crew."

The launch chugged alongside and pulled the yawl away from the lofty and beautiful image of the schooner which lay so still upon the burnished ocean beneath a sky spangled with stars. The land appeared dim and mysterious, infinitely remote from Norfolk and its yellow girls, and the alleys of the water-front so noisy and populous. Marooned was the word! Torn to shreds was the web of enchantment which Gus had woven to delude them. As the yawl became invisible from the schooner's deck, the exiled seamen were softly singing a sort of dirge in a minor key, which began:—

"Way-y down in Egypt la-a-nd,
Way-y down in Egypt la-a-nd,
Tell ol' Pharaoh
Let mah people go."

Peter Strawn turned away with a shrug. A light wind brushed his cheek and filled the shivering sails.

The water rippled beneath the counter and the schooner stood in toward the shore to pick up her boats and finish the pilgrimage to port. The mate sauntered aft, in a silent humor, wondering how he should write down this incident in the log. Later in the night he mentioned it to Captain Amazeen, who replied:—

“Set it down, ‘*Nine seamen deserted in the yawl.*’ That’s all, Mr. Strawn. What about the fracas? Entered that yet?”

“Losing Gus. Nothing more. I wanted your advice.”

“The truth, of course, but not too blamed much of it. How did you word it? ‘*Gus fell from the jib-boom?*’ Just one line more, —‘*Cap’n Fenwick shot by seaman Gus Henderson.*’ Nothin’ else necessary.”

“And your presence aboard with your men, Cap’n Amazeen?”

“‘*Rescued from schooner Anne Dudley, sunk in collision. Her master accepts all responsibility for the disaster.*’ That is accordin’ to Cap’n Fenwick’s wishes, I feel certain, Mr. Strawn. And we are bound to protect his good name and reputation. If he lives, I see no reason for letting this story leak out or become common talk. It would n’t help him any to get another ship. My men won’t blab it, and it’s safe to say those niggers ain’t advertisin’ ‘emselves for some time.”

“Suits me,” replied Peter Strawn, and for him the

voyage was a closed chapter, merely another episode in the hard game of earning his bread upon the sea. The ship might be unlucky, but his time had not come.

Next morning the *Elizabeth* waited off the entrance of Guantanamo Bay until a navy tug answered her fluttering string of signals and towed her in to an anchorage among the great, gray battleships and slim destroyers. Captain Amazeen went ashore to get his orders for discharging the coal, but first he trudged up the sloping hillside to the city of tents and barracks and headquarters buildings from which the battalions of Marines spread the gospel of law and order among the uneasy republics of the Caribbean. Decorous but sweltering in his black coat, the skipper's quest led him to the base hospital, so spacious, clean, and comfortable that the expression of his face was less wistfully anxious.

Even more reassuring was the manner in which he was received by the surgeon in charge, who displayed as cordial interest in the wounded shipmaster as if he wore the uniform of the Service. He would go on board himself and supervise the transfer of the patient. Captain Amazeen very briefly explained that he was in temporary command of the vessel and expected to carry her to Norfolk for orders.

“Did Captain Fenwick have trouble with his men?” was the surgeon's crisp query. “If you need a file of Marines, I will introduce you to the colonel —”

"All serene, thank you. There was one ugly customer who did the shootin', and Providence kindly removed him from our midst. He fell overboard at night and was drowned."

"A singular coincidence, but it is none of my affair," was the sensible reply.

The Elizabeth Wetherell sailed four days later, leaving Dudley Fenwick in the naval hospital with better than an even chance of recovery. An operation was necessary, delicate and dangerous, but his robust vitality survived the shock. Even with the most favorable progress, however, he could not hope to return to Spring Haven until weary weeks should have passed.

CHAPTER XIV

BRUSHING THE COBWEBS FROM SPRING HAVEN

HITHERTO, Mr. Amos Runlett had been the managing owner of the most important fleet of sailing vessels under the American flag, but his energetic ambition was not satisfied with this. For some time the great idea had fascinated him and now it was assuming practicable form. What he knew of Wall Street methods had convinced him that a combination of shipping interests might be devised to control the coal trade between Norfolk and the New England ports and so put an end to the costly competition which was forcing freight rates down to the vanishing point of profit. His own schooners were able to carry more than a half-million tons a year, and this argument won him a respectful hearing when he submitted the scheme to several of the large companies that operated barges and steamers.

He suggested a corporation which should be organized to steer clear of the laws against monopoly. The various properties would be exchanged for stock issued on the basis of future earnings, good-will, and so on, besides the actual values. Amos Runlett was willing to appraise the twelve Wetherell schooners at two hundred thousand dollars each, more than the original cost of building them and twice as much as

they were now worth in the old-fashioned system of buying and selling separate pieces of them. He was no visionary promoter, but a shrewd, successful business man, an argument that counted largely in his favor. After several conferences an agreement was signed which was to become effective as soon as he could deliver the controlling interest in the Wetherell fleet.

The negotiations had been under way when Dudley Fenwick first made his stubborn demand for salvage. Amos Runlett had not deliberately intended to defraud him, but to delay a settlement, with one pretext or another, until the claim could be paid in stock of the new organization. Personally owning the larger part of the Elizabeth Wetherell, the canny soul of Mr. Runlett rebelled against parting with twenty thousand dollars in this schooner when the fifth interest would be worth forty thousand dollars to him a little later. It was poor policy, also, to release any of his holdings at a time when he needed to increase them. As for a cash settlement with Fenwick, all the ready money available was needed to swing the bold enterprise.

The plan of campaign was to pick up the scattered outside pieces as quietly and cheaply as possible, and then purchase from the Wetherell estate, for his own account, whatever more was required to give him the upper hand and the authority to act. Miss Charlotte Wetherell, the Boston spinster, who had inherited

her shipping investments from a brother, left the management entirely with the sagacious Amos Runlett and accepted his advice without question. She had most graciously approved of his owning more and more shares in the vessels, as rapidly as he was able to take them over.

He felt certain, however, that she would oppose his project because of sentimental reasons. The Wetherell family had been famous in New England shipping annals for generations and Miss Charlotte was proud of its name and traditions. The fleet of six-masters had been her brother Leander's audacious conception, and so long as they paid expenses she would never begrudge the investment nor desire to surrender it to a corporation. This was why Amos Runlett preferred to have her infer, at the proper time, that he was buying for himself.

Now, when young Captain Terry Cochran so craftily invaded Spring Haven, moved by the spirit of friendship and a natural fondness for trouble, Mr. Runlett was about to instruct a discreet shipbroker to examine a list of the smaller owners, who lived in New England for the most part, and offer them a price for their sixty-fourths and one-hundred-and-twenty-eighths. Curiously enough, an interview with Mr. Runlett in a Boston newspaper painted the future of the big schooners in rather gloomy colors. The sailing vessel, said he, must expect to suffer the fate of the stage-coach and spinning-wheel.

It was also a coincidence, perhaps, that with freights unusually low and dividends difficult to earn, he should find it necessary to repair and overhaul several of the schooners. There was no surplus to pay these bills, for the accounts were balanced and closed at the end of every voyage. Many owners, therefore, found themselves assessed to defray this extra outlay, a misfortune which may have damaged their opinion of Wetherell shares. Nothing was more irritating than one of these "left-handed dividends."

Mr. Runlett's broker anticipated no obstacles in the way of persuading most of these people to sell for cash at the price which he was authorized to offer them. A year of industrial depression, afloat and ashore, had affected the coastwise trade in general. All vessel property had felt it. There was no improvement in sight, and the published opinions of Mr. Amos Runlett indicated that if the largest schooners were no longer profitable, with their wonderful economy of operation, it was a rather hopeless situation for the rest of them.

The discreet broker began with the Portland names on the list. After interviewing a half-dozen owners he was a perplexed and saddened man, but he hesitated to report his failure without further effort. A typical experience was the response of the acidulous widow who almost slammed the door on his nose.

"You have the nerve to come here and say you'll give me nine hundred dollars for my piece of the

Henry Wetherell! And I paid two thousand for it out of my husband's life insurance! It's earned me from ten to fifteen per cent income for years."

"But depreciation, madam, and times have changed for the worse —"

"Not for me they have n't, because I had a fair offer only yesterday, a great deal better than yours. And I've about made up my mind to accept it. Schooners do begin to seem risky and uncertain, but you sound perfectly ridiculous to me."

"May I ask who was foolish enough to waste good money like that?" demanded the broker.

"A person who would n't try to rob a poor widow woman," was the unsatisfactory answer, and then the door was closed with a bang.

The unfortunate man was more courteously received at other places, but the results were no different. In every instance he had been forestalled by this other purchaser, who had a list of his own and was prepared to set a higher price than Amos Runlett. The weary, bewildered broker finally discovered a trail which led him to the office of another ship-broker, Captain Jonathan Harding, of Spring Haven. The meeting between these two rivals was outwardly amicable, but a sheer waste of breath. It was a strictly private matter that Captain Jonathan Hardy had been employed by one Terry Cochran to snap up pieces of Wetherell vessels at a fair and honest price. The process of "whip-sawing" Mr. Amos Runlett was

in exceedingly capable hands. The baffled broker returned to announce his defeat, explaining in a hopeless manner: —

“Your money is no good, Mr. Runlett. The market has been boosted beyond your limit, for one thing, and somebody else is beating you at your own game. It’s a mystery to me.”

“How do you know? What nonsense is this?” bristled the man with the great idea.

“Jonathan Hardy is buying right and left, but the old liar refuses to admit it. He told me I ought to be ashamed to mention such preposterous prices, and then he laughed in my face.”

“Hardy of Spring Haven, eh? He used to sail for me. Who the devil would he be buying for? Ellery H. Titus, of the Spring Haven National? But that busted gas-bag owns something like forty thousand dollars in these vessels now, and I’m planning to put the screws on him and take it away at my figure.”

“You can search me, Mr. Runlett,” sighed the disgruntled ship-broker. “Of course this may be a local flurry. There are the Boston owners to be seen, and I have n’t heard from the letters I sent to other parts of the country. These folks on the Maine coast were all raised so close to salt water that it’s instinct to buy and sell schooner property. It’s about all they know. They can’t imagine you losing money in the big vessels, no matter what the newspapers say, for

you are a big toad in their puddle. I may have better luck elsewhere."

Amos Runlett curtly agreed with this view and cut the discussion short. He could not afford to disclose his own surprise and uneasiness. He felt certain that there had been no leak. He would wait and discover how far this buying movement extended. His supreme confidence in his ability to outwit the simple, old-fashioned class of people who invested their savings in sailing vessels was unshaken.

During the weeks following, however, he smoked too many cigars and was uncommonly rude to his clerks, symptoms of mental disturbance. His broker found that tactics somewhat different had been employed in Boston. While a few of the owners had sold their pieces outright, others had granted thirty and sixty day options, receiving ten per cent of the price to bind the bargain. Amos Runlett was, after all, an amateur at financial strategy and he had been accustomed to having his own way in the world. He had always beaten down opposition and was too impatient to sit and warily play the waiting game.

Outside of Portland and Boston, he learned, no attempt had been made to interfere with his plans. From this he argued that it might be a "local flurry." With more faith than good judgment, some one with considerable money to invest had probably concluded to put it into coastwise shipping. This was a lifelong habit with a certain solid, conserva-

tive element of old New England. The broker's theory had hit the nail on the head, Amos Runlett concluded. The effect was unfortunate, however, for it stiffened the market value of Wetherell shares which the managing owner was endeavoring in every way to depress. He might have to pay much more than he had expected in order to gather in the remainder of the smaller holdings, and this meant raising an inconveniently large amount of cash at short notice.

Again he decided to chart his course by what he fancied he knew concerning the methods of Wall Street. To sell some of his own shares was a risky expedient, but it ought to knock down the price. The news that he was getting out from under would soon spread among ship-brokers and so reach the owners whom he was anxious to influence. Few of them would wish to hold on if they thought that Amos Runlett was ready to quit the Wetherell fleet as no longer profitable.

After the most careful consideration, Amos Runlett launched his speculation, the decisive throw of the dice which might make or break him. Fear and uncertainty stalked at his elbow, for he was no hardened gambler. Very cautiously he instructed his broker to dispose of shares scattered among several schooners.

His chief anxiety was lest Miss Charlotte Wetherell might hear some rumor of this secret strategy which was, in fact, treasonable toward her interest in the

fleet. This he realized, and faced it without flinching. Big business, as he understood it, could not be hampered by scruples. Miss Wetherell would accept any statements of his in the absence of definite proof, which it was impossible for her to obtain.

This hazardous stroke of his seemed almost instantly successful. Unsuspecting ship-brokers were advising their friends and clients that it was a mistake to stay in the big schooners now that Amos Runlett had decided to shift his own investments into something else. He was selling pieces for whatever he could get for them, and delay in following his example would find a falling market.

Thus far Mr. Runlett had committed no serious blunders, but like other speculators he was unable to halt while he was winning. He hesitated, was inclined to begin purchasing under cover, and then determined to hammer values still lower by selling more of his own shares. What he sold he would buy back again at a lower figure, and he stood to win both ways, for he would also accomplish the main purpose of controlling the fleet and delivering it to the coastwise combination as agreed.

He was dreaming of conquests even more daring and ambitious when his broker telephoned, urgently requesting an interview in some quiet place away from the office. Mr. Runlett suggested a small hotel and jumped into a taxicab. He was more curious than alarmed. Engaging a room, he hastened up

stairs a few minutes ahead of the broker, who locked the door and exclaimed:—

“I am afraid this is too big for me to handle, Mr. Runlett. Anyhow, it does n’t look a bit good to me, and I can’t afford to stand the blame if it breaks wrong.”

“Let me do the worrying,” was the unperturbed reply. “You are bowling along with a fair wind, are n’t you?”

“No, sir. The weather signs don’t please me. The trouble is with this last lot of stuff you ordered me to sell for you. It ought to have been hard to dispose of. That was natural, was n’t it? And the price should have been dropping. Well, I sold it all without turning a hair, through brokers in Boston and New York, and they hollered for more,—said they could take all I could lay my hands on. And they were willing to pay for it, too. I had no hope of closing out the lot for more than forty thousand and it went for fifty-eight thousand dollars without a struggle. The market had been forced up instead of down. That was the symptom that frightened me.”

Amos Runlett was also displeased with the weather forecast. He sat fingering the clipped moustache, his demeanor not wholly jaunty. In this one transaction he had thrown overboard a hundred thousand dollars worth of shares, actual value, and twice as much in the capital stock which he had hoped to

exchange for it. He had been absolutely confident of demoralizing the market for this kind of investment, and was prepared to buy on the heels of it and so finish the brilliant adventure as a genius of finance. Roughly he demanded of the broker:—

“Why did n’t you hold off and wire for instructions?”

“Because you ordered me to sell at the market. Please don’t try to pass the buck, Mr. Runlett. You have not seen fit to enlighten me, remember. I have kept my mouth shut, of course, but it was more or less doing business in the dark.”

“Never mind that. Who were those other brokers acting for?”

“Ask me an easy one. At a guess, it was the same party that stood behind Captain Jonathan Hardy in Boston and Portland. They pretended to quit, but just steered off for a while until you made your next move. It is smooth work, and if my advice is worth anything, you will let it alone.”

Mr. Runlett questioned and blustered, but even his abuse was half-hearted. The broker listened with a cynical smile which hinted that, in this instance, the smart managing owner had foundered beyond his depth and would do well to scramble for the shore. This was the unhappy conclusion of Amos Runlett himself when he returned to his office and found upon his desk telegrams from three different brokers, begging for pieces of Wetherell schooners.

There was a rush to get aboard, said one of them. Long after the clerks had climbed from their stools and departed for the day, the astute Mr. Runlett covered sheets of paper with figures or absently stared out of the window. Some unknown agency had tossed a monkey-wrench into the machinery.

In striking contrast was the care-free aspect of Captain Joseph Dabney, of Norfolk, who, at this same hour, was in a sleeping-car homeward-bound from New York. As the individual who had wantonly hurled the monkey-wrench, he appeared to feel more pride than remorse. When he disembarked next morning, his vivacious daughter, Ivy Belle, met him in a shiny, new roadster and demanded, as they sped toward the water-side: —

“Did you whip-saw him, dad? I have missed you frightfully, and sending Terry on ahead to comfort me was just too thoughtful for words. He was wild to wait for the latest news, but he had to take the Undaunted to sea this morning.”

“It was Terry’s perfo’mance, honey. All I did was to put on the finishin’ touches and supply the necessary banking facilities. Yes, we come mighty near taking his schooners away from Amos Runlett, we sho’ly did. When I figured out the returns, I found I owned more in several of ‘em than he did.”

“What about Dudley Fenwick’s Elizabeth Wetherell? How much of her did you burgle?”

“Amos owned seventy per cent of her,” chuckled

Captain Joe. "Miss Wetherell and a few small owners held the balance. I pried poor old Amos loose from most of his and secured options on the little pieces in Boston. When Dudley gets the fifth interest that's comin' to him in salvage, I reckon he and I will be managing owners of the *Elizabeth*."

"Splendid! And what will you do with your shares in the other schooners, dad?" cried Ivy Belle.

"Smile and look on, child, until I find out what Amos had up his sleeve when Terry smoked him out. I bought 'em cheap and I can't lose. And I did n't skin a single widow or orphan, but I do flatter myself that I peeled the hide off Amos Runlett, the sho't-card sport. I'm in about three hundred thousand dollars' worth of vessels at a cost of less than half of that."

"And now are you sure that Terry is a safe and sane business man?" urged Ivy Belle, to whom this was the vital issue. "Is n't he fit to be trusted ashore?"

"I'll snatch him off that tow-boat next month, child, for keeps. Mighty little good it will do you, though. I understand he fell in love with a Spring Haven girl — Miss Eldredge. What do you know about that?"

"Pooh! He never even met her — afraid of Dudley Fenwick's wrath. He confessed to me that he sat in the library and admired her. That was awful enough, but I forgave him."

Terry had gone to sea in response to a message from the signal station at the Capes that a six-masted schooner was waiting for a tow-boat. When he steamed close enough to recognize the Elizabeth Wetherell, he blew the whistle in a jubilant greeting to Dudley Fenwick. Ranging alongside, however, he noticed a white crew on deck and Captain Wesley Amazeen giving the orders. Fearing bad news, Terry leaped aboard and introduced himself to the lean old skipper, who said as they shook hands:—

“I know all about you, Cap’n Cochran. Dudley told me you were a friend of his. Better let your boat go ahead with the hawser and you come below with me.”

Terry nodded and they passed into the cabin. He dared not ask what had become of Fenwick. Wesley Amazeen closed the doors and spoke with a kind of weighty solemnity.

“I was to tell you or Cap’n Joe Dabney, whichever I chanced to meet. Dudley knew there’d be curious questions asked in Norfolk and you could stand ‘em off. He is hangin’ on the edge of life and death at Guantanamo where I left him. Shot by a sailor on the voyage down. Do you happen to recall the nigger, name o’ Gus Henderson?”

“Yes; he had a police record. He was in a boat of mine some time ago. What did you do with him?”

“He disappeared, Cap’n Cochran, and I set the rest of ‘em ashore in Cuby. They are logged as de-

serters. It was a mutiny. I propose to spin the whole yarn to you, same as Dudley Fenwick commanded me."

Terry listened, his chin in his hand, while the schooner moved quietly in the wake of the Undaunted. An hour passed before Wesley Amazeen halted to take from his coat a worn leather wallet and carefully unfold a creased, stained, and ragged sheet of paper. It was the page from the log upon which Captain William Dodge had written the last words that ever came from him.

"Dudley wanted me to fetch this home," said the skipper, glancing over his spectacles, "and I was to show it to you. Read it yourself."

Terry perused the brief routine statement which assumed all responsibility for abandoning the ship, and just above the signature the farewell lines:—

I hereby commend Mr. Fenwick and believe him qualified to be given command of a vessel. My wife wishes to be kindly remembered to him.

Terry Cochran stared at the sheet of paper while his mind framed, clause by clause, the indictment that stood against Amos Runlett. It made the plot to thwart him financially seem small and futile, punishment inadequate beside this unbreakable chain of circumstances.

" 'T is strange and wonderful, Cap'n Amazeen," said he, "how a man's sins will follow and trip him. I will speak freely because you have trusted me.

I have learned many things about this Amos Runlett in the town that raised him. He is highly respectable, what the landsman calls a pillar of society. The clergy give him the glad hand and parents model their children after him. In the sight of you and me, he has behaved like a blackguard and worse.. For lack of this bit of paper from Cap'n Dodge, Runlett fought against giving Fenwick what belonged to him."

"Dudley is more anxious to clear his own character," broke in Wesley Amazeen, "than he is to collect his salvage. After he was shot, he took a sort of horror to money as the root of all evil."

"It bred sorrow enough in this vessel," mused Terry. "One man is dead of it, and Fenwick looking over the brink as you say. And your own schooner gone to glory, Cap'n Amazeen. No insurance? How much does Dudley lose on her?"

"The Anne was too old to insure. Not that she'd sell for anything, but she was worth fifteen thousand to Dudley and me. With decent freights that was a reasonable figger for her."

"What could she earn, Cap'n Amazeen, before the dull times?"

"Two thousand clear, half to me and half to Israel Fenwick as owner. We was both satisfied with that. And she could ha' done it again."

"No doubt. Fifteen thousand dollars! On top of Dudley's salvage claim. The bill against Amos Run-

leett is almost doubled. But it is not to be measured in terms of dollars. What will you do with this precious bit of paper from the dead?"

"If Dudley Fenwick dies," answered the skipper, "I'll have a talk with Amos Runlett that will make his soul turn over, or I miss my guess."

"Going home at once, sir?"

"Yes; and my own crew with me. And Alfred, the cook, swears he's done with the vessel. Mr. Strawn 'll stay to look after her until orders come from Portland."

"Dudley may never want to sail in her again," ventured Terry. "Too many ghosts aboard."

"Would you blame him, Cap'n Cochran? She reeks of unhappiness."

"She stinks of the greed for money," fiercely declared Terry, "from the day that Cap'n William Dodge overloaded her with coal and drove her to her doom in a nor'easter. And if it had been left to Dudley Fenwick, she would still be a sweet, contented ship with no blot on her good name."

CHAPTER XV

HIGH FINANCE STRIKES THE ROCKS

KATE ELDREDGE had been oftener in Dudley Fenwick's thoughts than she has appeared in this story of his adventures at sea. The current of her life in Spring Haven was violently disturbed when Wesley Amazeen and his crew came home from Norfolk with their tragic tidings. Her chubby uncle, Captain Elmer Gallant, had refitted his schooner, the *Mary Fenwick*, and was about to sail from the shipyard. It was Ellery H. Titus, president of the bank, who furnished the money from the funds secretly advanced by Terry Cochran, but this, of course, was for nobody to know, and Mr. Titus was fervently thanked as a true and loyal friend.

At this same time Dudley's other more pressing obligations were paid in full. This had the effect of quieting the scandal stirred up by the protested checks, and Ellery Titus pompously took to himself the favorable comment of the town. The Fenwick yard was a hopeless investment, but he had come to the rescue in order to clear its long and honorable reputation.

As a farewell ceremony Captain Elmer Gallant invited his beloved niece aboard the *Mary Fenwick* before he hoisted sail with the turn of the morning

tide. He lived in a toy cabin compared with that of a six-master, but it was bright and cosy, reflecting his own abounding good-humor. The mate had gone ashore, and it was a very small party of two that sat down to the baked beans and brown bread of Saturday night. Having said grace and tucked his napkin under his chin, Captain Elmer heartily exclaimed:—

“I wish Dudley was here to join the celebration, Kate. I seemed like a discouragin’ proposition when he went away, tied up to the wharf for lack of canvas. About time we heard from this Cuban trip of his. And Wesley Amazeen in the Anne Dudley was reported as leavin’ Havana some time ago. Kind of odd if they should speak each other.”

“Not half so odd as the things that have happened to you and your friends,” said Kate, with the slow, reflective smile which wonderfully heightened the charm of her fine features. “The sea is full of magical surprises that could n’t possibly be true on land. The first six-masted schooners were built when I was a little girl. There were only two of them afloat, you remember, when they collided in a fog. With all that waste of empty ocean they had to come together.”

“Seemed as if there was room for two of ‘em,” said Uncle Elmer.

A sea-roughened voice, familiar to both, startled them as Wesley Amazeen shouted from the doorway:—

“How about room for another one? I stopped at



"I WISH DUDLEY WAS HERE TO JOIN THE CELEBRATION"

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the house to see Aunt Mary Fenwick and she asked me to supper, but I saw the cabin lit up and kept on coming. Glad to know you're done hibernatin', Elmer, you old woodchuck. How are you, Kate? Kiss your wicked old uncle by adoption. Last time we met in the yard, I was busy leadin' Cap'n Gallant into the presence of strong drink."

"And I rescued him from your evil influence, Captain Wesley," laughed Kate, dutifully saluting his wrinkled cheek. "Let me set a plate and —"

"Make him talk first," sternly interrupted Captain Elmer. "Did you ever watch him eat? He goes at it single-minded."

Wesley Amazeen lost his boisterous manner and seemed not to hear this uncomplimentary remark. He gazed at the girl for a moment and awkwardly patted her hand. Perhaps Dudley Fenwick had mentioned her during those days of suffering in the Elizabeth Wetherell. Then he told them, very much as he had related the tale of disaster to Terry Cochran, but with even more feeling. Elmer Gallant frequently broke in with ejaculations of pity and astonishment, but Kate Eldredge sat silent, her hands tightly clasped, a brooding sorrow in her dark eyes.

"Seems as if Dudley deserved better luck, Wesley," said Elmer Gallant. "That day he talked to us, — after Israel's funeral, — we thought nothing could stop him. I feel kind of guilty for recommendin' him to go as mate in the Elizabeth."

"He had your fault — trying to find more good in people than there really was," was the retort.

"It's somewhere in the worst of 'em," Elmer gently insisted, — "even in your vindictive old carcass. What are you going to do for another vessel?"

"Nobody wants me in a schooner," replied Wesley, "though I don't show my age and can whale the tar out of most of the youngsters. I guess I'll rest a little spell ashore and mebbe there'll be some repair work here in the yard that I can lend a hand with."

"That's good, Wesley. John Moon tells me he thinks of start'n' up again without waiting for Dudley. It seems there's a little money in the bank he can use, so Ellery Titus says."

These two veteran seafarers had been boys together and the talk flowed on into the evening while Kate Eldredge harkened, now with amusement, again touched and moved by their brave simplicity and affection for each other, although Wesley Amazeen abused and insulted her rosy saint of an uncle. It was Wesley who escorted her through the shipyard and down the quiet street to the boarding-house. At parting, he said in a fatherly way: —

"It seems to mean considerable to Dudley Fenwick that you are a friend of his, Kate. He's no great match, mebbe, if he comes home alive, with this condemned old shipyard tied to him and his mind made up to quit sailin' for Amos Runlett. But he's an in-

fernal good boy, and he's had the devil's own b'ilin' of misfortune."

"A good boy, Captain Wesley?" whimsically echoed Kate. "I like your way of putting it. Could he ask for better credentials? It is rather soon to discuss him as a matrimonial prospect, but you are always in a hurry. You were in the tow-boat office at Norfolk, I presume. Did you happen to meet a Miss Ivy Belle Dabney?"

"I did, and she's a lively little piece of goods. But what in blazes has she got to do with my stickin' in my oar for Dudley Fenwick?"

"Nothing whatever. I merely wanted to hear your opinion of her."

"Well, you're more to my taste, Kate. I don't fancy 'em too pert and flighty. Cap'n Terry Cochran is mighty sweet on this Ivy Belle girl, and the old man don't seem to hate the idea. I should say they were near due to make a double hitch of it."

"Thank you so much, Captain Wesley. And you will be sure to bring me any word you may hear from Guantanamo?"

"If I have to toss a brick through your window to wake you in the middle of the night."

To Spring Haven came Mr. Amos Runlett next day in search of this exasperating Captain Amazeen who had brought the Elizabeth Wetherell into Norfolk and there deserted her with no more than an impertinent telegram worded as follows: —

Fetched your ship home and left the mate in charge. I know better than to claim salvage. You can't squeeze blood out of a turnip.

It appeared as though Mr. Runlett might be unpopular with Captain Amazeen and his crew, for not a solitary soul of them could be found, although he raked Spring Haven from one end to the other. It was also a fair conjecture that they saw him first. Of the men who had sailed with Fenwick, only Alfred, the cook, was a possible informant. He had tarried in the town to visit those second cousins once removed. After a most annoying chase, Mr. Runlett ran him to earth in a barber shop. Alfred turned pale beneath the lather when the mirror disclosed the forbidding image of the managing owner, who scowled at him and commanded the barber to make a quick job of it.

There was no way of escape, and presently the cook obeyed a beckoning finger and meekly followed his captor to a room in the bank building near by. The smooth-shaven countenance, large and bland, wore an air of injured innocence. Captain Wesley Amazeen had successfully frightened him into holding his tongue, no mean achievement, and Alfred fully believed that the old pirate would kill him on sight if he told anything whatever about the voyage. He was therefore prepared to perjure himself, if necessary.

“Where is Captain Fenwick, and what’s the an-

swer to Wesley Amazeen?" hotly demanded Mr. Runlett, walking the floor.

"Cap'n Dudley Fenwick?" pleasantly inquired Alfred. "Oh, yes. He did n't come home with us, did he. I guess it sort of slipped my mind. Well, Mr. Runlett, he did n't impart his plans to me,—which you would n't expect, discipline bein' strict aboard,—but my idea is that he stayed in Cuba for his health. Yes, sir, he needed a change of air and scenery."

"You oakum-headed old fool! What are you drivellin' about?"

"About Cap'n Dudley Fenwick," reasonably answered Alfred.

"Was there any trouble aboard the *Elizabeth*?"

"Nothing that I consider worth mentionin', Mr. Runlett. The crew stayed in Cuba, too, if that interests you. You save a trip's wages on 'em."

"I wish you had stayed there," was the irritable comment. "Did Wesley Amazeen and his men work the ship home? Did they fall out of a balloon?"

"By gracious, Mr. Runlett, I should n't wonder if they did. It was after dark and I was busy with a deck-mop, so I did n't notice particularly. I never thought of a balloon. It takes a clever man to figger out things like that."

"You are lying, Alfred, lying like a trooper to cover something up," cried the owner, conscious that he had made not the slightest progress.

"It ain't gentlemanly to call a man a liar with no deck-mop handy," earnestly protested the cook. "I'm not workin' for you any longer, I want you to understand, Mr. Amos Runlett, and if we can't act like gentlemen it's good-afternoon. Go read the ship's log. That's official."

"I'll get at the bottom of this, and make it hot for all hands of you!" was the vehement threat.

"I'm inclined to think you'll hear enough about it sooner or later," said Alfred. "There was another time when I helped bring your big schooner into port. Recollect it? You called us liars, or words to that effect. It's a careless habit with you. Funny how I've got all over bein' scared of you, in the last few minutes."

With impressive dignity, Alfred put on his hat, after brushing it with his sleeve, and passed at a rolling gait into the street. Mr. Runlett muttered language which no gentleman should use and strode into another room, sacred to the president of the bank, in the same building. Here was also a large, pale, flabby person presumed to be in subjection to the masterful man of affairs who had resolved to remove the cobwebs from Spring Haven. As usual, Ellery H. Titus was deftly peeling a Baldwin apple which he balanced upon the point of his knife, with no indication of timidity at the entrance of the powerful Amos Runlett. The latter spoke as brusquely as to an office boy.

"Why didn't you answer my letter, Ellery? I made you an offer for your pieces in the Wetherell vessels, a very fair offer under the circumstances. You paid forty thousand dollars for them, but they are worth nothing like that to-day."

Mr. Titus arranged the four quarters of the apple in a neat row upon the desk and surprisingly replied:

"You did n't try to deal with me through your broker, Amos, and hide behind him, as you did with the other owners. Why was that?"

"Who said anything about a broker? You were supposed to do as you were told and keep still about it."

"You were trying to buy from me, Amos, and at the same time you were secretly selling in New York and Boston. Why was that?" imperturbably inquired Mr. Titus.

"If you had ever learned to mind your own business, I might not have kicked you out of the bank."

"So? Well, I have a notion that I may kick myself back in again before long, Amos. And in that event you will not be able to use one dollar of the Spring Haven National's funds to juggle and gamble in schooners whose welfare is entrusted to you by the other owners. Ha! This is most enjoyable."

"Senile debility! A pitiful case," grunted Mr. Rundlett, who could have been no more amazed if a sheep had bitten him. "Swelled all up again! What do they call it? Delusions of greatness."

"The malady which has recently afflicted you, Amos. The maggot in your apple. Concerning these vessel shares of mine, I can dispose of them to much better advantage if I so desire. But at present I have no inclination to sell. I may add that my other investments are now so soundly protected that I may snap my fingers at your cowardly threat to 'put the screws to me.' Ha! 'Senile debility!' I shall shortly be rehabilitated in the eyes of my fellow townsmen, while you —"

Ellery H. Titus brushed the apple peeling into the waste-basket. The gesture made words superfluous. It was obvious to Amos Runlett that this defiant banker, hitherto so docile and harmless, had formed a powerful alliance and was a party to the conspiracy which had wrecked his plan to control the Wetherell fleet. Perhaps a truce might be possible.

Less bellicose were the accents of Amos Runlett as he exclaimed:—

"I apologize, Ellery. But you are going entirely too far. You can't help bragging and boasting. Shoving me into the waste-basket is a foolish threat. And you are a back number in this bank, you know."

"How long will this bank stand up without character behind it?" impressively declaimed Ellery Titus. "One whisper, — I shall not hesitate to protect the interests of the depositors, — and they will shun you and the Spring Haven National like a plague. Yes, gambling in honest, down-east vessels

is a new trick to them, and they are too old-fashioned to understand it. A back number? Ha! In the slang of the day, Amos, I have indubitably got your number."

"Any more shot in the locker?" snarled the other man.

"One round of shrapnel. In my own safety deposit box is a sealed envelope addressed to Miss Charlotte Wetherell at her Boston address. It contains an accurate list of your sales and purchases in Wetherell schooners during the last month, every one of them executed without her knowledge or consent. A sworn statement also implicates you in spreading the false report that Thurber & Gerrish are to build a fleet of steamers to put the big schooners out of business. There is also an affidavit from John Moon, foreman of the Fenwick yard, that you laid schooners up for unnecessary repairs and overhauling and thereby deprived them of charters and robbed their owners of dividends. John Moon, at my request and at my expense, visited and inspected every one of these schooners. Small owners who could not afford it were even assessed to pay these bills. Your motive was apparent. There are other documents in the envelope, Amos. Miss Charlotte Wetherell is an intelligent woman and very sensitive concerning the honor of the fleet. Shall I mail her the envelope to-day, or will you relinquish your cursed, meddlesome interference with the conduct of *my* bank?"

Ellery H. Titus puffed out his chest, uttered another loud "Ha" like a minute gun, and reached for his tall hat to signify that the interview was about to terminate. There were no cobwebs on him. Amos Runlett surrendered with alacrity.

"I would n't mail the envelope, if I were you, Ellery," said he. "I thought you were pretty well flattened out, but you certainly have bobbed up serenely."

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again, Amos. Sign over your stock in the Spring Haven National to me as agent and I will sell it for you. Also, lead the new cashier out by the ear as you go. And behave yourself, Amos. I shall follow your career with diligent attention. In the slang of the day, watch your step."

"You get the bank stock," agreed Mr. Runlett, "and you can reappoint your own cashier. You will — er — you will forget this misunderstanding, Ellery? I have your word —"

"It is as good as my bond," said Mr. Titus. "Antiquated methods, Amos, but they suit Spring Haven better than yours. You are a first-class shipping man, but as a wizard of finance I am afraid you won't do. My duty compels me to tell you, in the slang of the day, where you get off."

The banker glanced at the waste-basket and displayed his false teeth in a smile so patronizing that Mr. Runlett yearned to slay him in his tracks. Im-

mediately thereafter they went their separate ways, Ellery H. Titus to parade through India Street as grandly as of yore, Amos Runlett to retire to his own room in the bank building and conduct a personal inquest. He had been defeated with serious damage to his feelings, his prestige, and his pocket-book. There was no avoiding this most unpleasant conclusion.

With regard to the Wetherell schooners, he had sold more heavily than he was able to buy, and he had sold at a loss. Moreover, the secret opposition made it hopeless to attempt to obtain control of the fleet. Ellery Titus and his documentary evidence were insurmountable. The combination to dominate the coastwise coal trade had gone glimmering. It never occurred to Mr. Runlett to suspect Dudley Fenwick or Captain Joseph Dabney, of Norfolk, as in any way connected with this swift, concerted attack against him.

In fact, he had been little concerned for the fortunes of young Captain Fenwick until the Elizabeth Wetherell returned from Cuba without him.

This latest visit to Spring Haven had exceedingly distressed Mr. Runlett, what with an impudent sea-cook and a banker in revolt; but the worst was over and he looked forward to a quiet hour in the public library which he had so handsomely endowed. And a widower so spruce and well-preserved as he might readily be imagined as seeking one who should orna-

ment his home and brighten his life with companionship.

To pay his addresses to Miss Kate Eldredge was an undertaking beset with difficulty because she had failed to invite him to call at the boarding-house and the library was most inconveniently public. Now that the spring of the year had come, motoring was an enjoyable pastime, but this blooming young woman ignored the suggestion. He was therefore compelled to invent one pretext after another for conversation during her hours of duty, and Spring Haven read him with more ease than some of the books which it carried out under its arms.

A middle-aged man in pursuit of girlhood's charms is apt to be a spectacle more or less fatuous and self-evident. And although Mr. Runlett might chat of books and the architect's plans for enlarging the building, and similar impersonal topics, the observant ladies who flocked to the circulation desk murmured to each other that there was no fool like an old fool, and that Kate Eldredge ought to know better than to encourage his kittenish tricks.

She did not know how to discourage him, poor girl. He was the most influential trustee and she was a hired servant, nor had he given her cause for open resentment. When he entered the library, late in this April afternoon, her day's work was almost finished and he lingered to walk home with her. As usual, her manner toward him was courteous, scrupulously

so, without self-consciousness. For all the difference it made, he might have been the poorest, shabbiest patron of the reading-room. She was unaware, Mr. Runlett concluded, of the singular distinction which he was prepared to offer her. The time had come for a definite understanding. They had passed out of the library together and were in one of the smaller streets when Kate's dapper, alert companion suggested:—

“What do you say to a glimpse of blue water from Brigantine Hill, Miss Eldredge? The sea will be quiet and fine with this southerly breeze.”

She appeared to hesitate, but replied, rather absently:—

“Yes, I will walk as far as the hill with you. I have n't seen the ocean since the pleasant weather came. In winter I worry about my friends afloat.”

“That is to be expected. You come of seafaring people,” said he, in his brisk manner. “Your father was a very capable shipmaster, Miss Eldredge. I was greatly shocked when he was lost with his schooner several years ago. If he had lived there would have been a Wetherell vessel ready for him before now.”

“He might have preferred to sail for some one —” Kate bit her lip and delayed the open hostility which she felt no longer able to dissemble.

“And there is your uncle, Elmer Gallant,” continued Amos Runlett, intent upon his own devices. “I was anxious to give him a lift when that old coaster of his was laid up at the yard for lack of

money to refit. He is cranky and independent, like most of those old barnacles, — I realized that he needed whatever the little schooner could earn, — with your mother and sisters living at home with him — ”

“Self-respecting is a better word than ‘cranky,’ Mr. Runlett,” said Kate, with an emphasis more marked. “And I’m sure my mother has made no appeal for charity or sympathy.”

A high-spirited girl, reflected the middle-aged suitor, and to be handled with care. This contempt for money and ease was a feminine pretence which could be brushed aside if he employed tact and patience. He talked agreeably until they climbed the winding road that led over Brigantine Hill, whose summit commanded a wide perspective of rivers and islands and a sea which fringed the rugged coast with a dazzling ribbon of surf.

A little to the eastward was Christmas Point and the stone-walled enclosure with its white slabs to which the first Israel Fenwick had been borne upon the shoulders of six of his ship-carpenters, and to which the second Israel had journeyed in the same manner. To the northward the swelling hill sloped in the direction of the Fenwick yard with its gray sheds and shops beside the Winnebassett River, the gaunt stagings, and the empty marine railway.

Kate Eldredge gazed at these storied memorials while the man at her side was saying: —

“What a pity it is to feel moored to the past, like Dudley Fenwick, for instance. He has let sentiment stand in his way, interfere with his career.”

“Sentiment will never interfere with your success, Mr. Runlett,” she quickly spoke up.

“Ah, perhaps you are mistaken, Miss Eldredge. Sentiment? Not in business, possibly. But I think I can convince you that at forty-five a man may be young at heart and feel stirred by sentiment. Indeed, he may be capable of falling in love at first sight. I am not an expert at flowery language and all that, but there are certain advantages to be gained by marrying me which I wish you would consider very carefully. I am tremendously interested in you,—I’m sure you must have noticed it,—and I see no reason for beating about the bush. Your willingness to walk out here with me this afternoon seemed a favorable sign.”

“Yes, I suspected you might have something like this in mind,” said she, looking, not at him, but at the sea upon which a sail gleamed low. “And so this is a proposal of marriage, from a man who is ever so much older than I, but so rich and influential in the sight of Spring Haven that there are ‘certain advantages.’”

“Decidedly so, but we need not put it on a mercenary basis,” he exclaimed.

“Then I am to consider only the qualities in you that should attract a woman’s love? Courage, honor, fidelity?”

"You may express it that way, if you like, Miss Eldredge. I should much rather be taken for what I am than for what I have."

"But you have n't asked me whether there is any one else, Mr. Runlett. You take it for granted that I am fancy free?"

"Well, there have been no young men hanging around you since you came to Spring Haven, nobody that you'd be likely to bother with. Dudley Fenwick is the best of the lot, but he has been away so much that he hardly had a chance to meet you."

"He lacks those certain advantages which make your own arguments so persuasive," said Kate, and the irony was too subtle for him to detect. "By the way, where is Captain Dudley Fenwick? You have the latest news from him, of course!"

Under his breath Amos Runlett cursed his stupidity for bringing Fenwick's name into it. Hastily he answered: —

"His schooner came home from Cuba without him, as you may have heard from Wesley Amazeen or his men. I'm afraid I shall have to run down to Norfolk to investigate. There is some kind of a cooked-up yarn behind it."

It came like a bolt from the blue when Kate exclaimed: —

"If you knew the whole truth of the story, you would be ashamed to show your face in Spring Haven!"

Amos Runlett forgot his courtship, forgot all else than angry bewilderment. At every turn he had encountered a mysterious hostility which seemed to menace and overshadow him. This manifestation was so unlooked-for that he betrayed his alarm as he feelingly implored: —

“For God’s sake, what have I done to set all Spring Haven against me? Are you in the plot? Is this why you walked out here with me, to play your part in it?”

“There is no plot, Mr. Runlett, unless you wove it yourself. I wish I were free to tell you what you have done to make yourself despised. It is not my affair. Perhaps it is better for you not to know — the punishment may be harder to bear if there is no chance to explain and defend yourself.”

“I have made myself despised?” he shouted, incredulous, insulted, infuriated by this new attack. “In love with Dudley Fenwick, are you? Letting him use you to square an imaginary grudge against me? Is this your answer to the greatest compliment a man can pay you — a man who is anxious to pick you up out of poverty and marry you?”

“Why did you deal so unfairly with Dudley Fenwick?” Kate demanded, ignoring his shockingly bad manners. “I am curious to hear your reasons.”

“Because he tried to do me, and Amos Runlett is not rated a soft mark,” was the stormy response.

“That reminds me,” said the girl, her poise unshaken. “Captain William Dodge has sent a mes-

sage. You remember Captain Dodge, of the Elizabeth Wetherell. He is dead, but he has sent a message all the way back to Spring Haven. I have seen and read it, and can repeat it word for word."

"Clairvoyant stuff? Spirit writing?" he blurted. "And you are silly enough to fall for it? Just like a woman."

"You will accept it as true, Mr. Runlett, when it comes to you," she solemnly affirmed. "I advise you to keep your word with Mr. Dudley Fenwick and not delay another day."

"The certificates for those shares, do you mean?" He spoke eagerly, with a futile hope of ingratiating himself. "The fifth interest in the Elizabeth Wetherell? I have sold part of the schooner recently, but I still own a fifth in her. I intend to send the certificates to Dudley Fenwick — I never meant to do anything else, Miss Eldredge. They will be forwarded to his home address as soon as I reach my office."

"Then you will not have to be afraid of the message from Captain William Dodge," replied Kate. "He was drowned, poor man, but he sent word to you to be just to Dudley Fenwick."

The hard-headed Amos Runlett had been a sailor before the mast in his youth, and possibly the superstitions of the forecastle were not wholly dislodged from his memory. Strange it was to note that he asked no more questions concerning the girl's extraordinary statement. It was as though he had heard

quite enough of Captain Dodge and his uncanny message. He was moody and abashed as he said:—

“It was this business dispute of mine with Fenwick, then, that set you against me, Miss Eldredge? I suppose you got a twisted version of it at the ship-yard. You declared just now that you despised me. Did you honestly mean to say anything as rough as that?”

“Yes, I could not help meaning it,” she told him. “And if you really do care for me, it will be part of your penalty. You are not conscious of having been tricky and disloyal and unfair, and that seems very sad to me. I had so much respect for you when I came to Spring Haven, for your generosity to the town, for your interest in the library. And the respect has all vanished. I shall resign from my position, of course, before you tell the other trustees to dismiss me.”

“I would n’t do that,” he strongly objected, the asperity gone from his voice, his manner appealing. “I seem to have stranded myself as a total loss, as far as your regard is concerned, but I am not mean enough to show personal spite. It’s hands off, I promise, and you are not to worry about your place in the library.”

“And do you promise not to talk to me and make me so conspicuous? Oh, if you only knew how I have hated it!”

“I accept your terms,” said he. “It begins to look

as if I knew when I was whipped. I ought to learning, after to-day's experiences in Spring Hav. If you knew what I've been through, upon my sc Miss Eldredge, I actually believe you would f sorry for me."

CHAPTER XVI

THE OLD DAYS COME BACK AGAIN!

THE month was June when Dudley Fenwick returned in a navy transport bound to Boston. Strength had come back so slowly that he looked ahead, with a kind of languid contentment, to puttering in the ship-yard before resuming the hard trade of a seafarer. Letters from Wesley Amazeen had contained news to free him of the most urgent anxieties. Ellery H. Titus had volunteered a loan of two thousand dollars and the yard was clear of difficulties, with a little repair work trickling in. The salvage claim had been paid by the transfer of certificates to Dudley's name, and Amos Runlett had also sent a check for primeage on the freight to Guantanamo, besides the dividend for the voyage. Amos was behaving almost human, wrote Wesley, like he had seen a great light, or somebody had given him a proper wallopin', but he was looking for another master to put in the Elizabeth.

This was no disappointment to Fenwick, who had determined to part company with Mr. Runlett, now that he was released from the financial obligations which had crippled and bound him. He had been unlucky in the Elizabeth Wetherell, but it was no fault of the stately six-master, and he wished for her a more benignant fortune with another skipper on

the quarter-deck. He was not disheartened, but profoundly grateful to be alive and awaiting the next tussle with opportunity. And so he found a welcome in Spring Haven, and sympathy because of his long illness. Now and then a small schooner hauled out at the shipyard and John Moon had restored a few men to the pay-roll, with a new recruit in Captain Wesley Amazeen who made himself surprisingly useful for small wages.

Fenwick was troubled by a sense of failure only when he encountered Kate Eldredge, which was infrequently. She was quick to discern just where the trouble lay — that it hurt him to recall all the fine words and boyish confidence in the future, and now he had nothing to show for them. In his own sight he was a shipmaster without employment, who had made a good deal of a smash of it. This had not broken his faith in ultimate success, but he believed that he must first achieve it before his pride would permit him to accept the girl's loyal friendship as deserved. Her summer vacation from the library was prolonged by illness in the household at Rockland, and although Dudley had seen her so seldom, the town seemed lonely without her bright presence.

In August he received a letter from Captain Joe Dabney, who was in New York, suggesting that he run down and discuss a little business matter. The invitation was promptly accepted, and the jovial sportsman from Norfolk interrupted his exhaustive

udy of the theatres and cafés of Broadway to spend quiet evening with the down-east sailor who had so stubbornly asserted his independence. Diplomacy as the trick, reflected Captain Joe, who had no tention of telling all he knew.

“You are thinner, my boy, but the punch will come back,” said he, with the old, affectionate smile. Terry told me all about it. That nigger mighty ear had you thumbnin’ a golden harp instead of a extant. Feeling fit to go to sea again?”

“Almost, sir. I can’t afford to loaf at home much longer. I own a fifth interest in the Elizabeth Wethell, but she has n’t paid a dividend since my last dip in her.”

“She laid idle at Norfolk for some time,” explained Captain Joe. “Your mate, Peter Strawn, got disisted and went in a smaller schooner. You see, Duddy, it was this way. Coal charters have been scarce and Amos Runlett was glad to get long-term contracts at a low freight for some of his vessels. He as n’t interested in cinchin’ this sort of an arrangement for the Elizabeth because he had parted with most of what he owned in her.”

“Who bought it? Somebody had money to throw away,” was Fenwick’s comment.

“I was the unfo’tunate sucker,” blithely confessed Captain Dabney. “It had nothing whatever to do ith your affairs, son,” he mendaciously continued. You were emphatic about my butting in, remem-

ber. I had a few dollars seekin' investment and I took a flyer in the big schooners. Miss Charlotte Wetherell, of Boston, has recently surrendered to me her piece of the Elizabeth, after considerable persuasion on my part. She seemed to appreciate dealing with a gentleman instead of dickerin' with a Yankee trader, and I explained that I already owned a heavy interest in the schooner. She was unable to comprehend why Amos Runlett had let me have most of his own holdings in the Elizabeth, and I could n't enlighten her, Dudley."

"Great news!" exclaimed the sailor. "Then you and I own the old hooker between us, Captain Joe?"

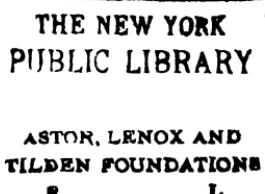
"We do so, but I don't know that we are to be congratulated. I delayed takin' the management of her away from Amos Runlett until you were in shape to command her."

"But what put it into your head to buy? Was it because you wanted to make things pleasanter for me — sailing for you instead of Runlett?"

"Not a bit of it, boy. It was on the strength of a quiet tip that Amos Runlett was buyin' pieces of the schooners wherever he could pick 'em up. I reckoned he was holdin' out an ace, but perhaps he was too smooth for me. Nothing happened. It looks as if I'm stung. He even let me buy some of his shares in the other vessels of the fleet. I wonder if the abandoned scoundrel did n't *whip-saw me*. Perhaps he thought it was a good time to sell."



IT WAS AMOS RUNLETT, AFTER ALL, WHO APPEARED TO HOLD
THE WINNING CARDS



"He was right, at that," rather dismally observed Fenwick. "And he won't let the *Elizabeth* get a cargo away from his other schooners. Well, I'm delighted to hear that you and I are partners. It lifts the hoodoo from the old ship. Of course I'll take her and thank you, whenever you can find a charter. It's the hardest summer in years for the soft-coal trade to eastern ports."

They were silent while the same thought occurred to both. It was Amos Runlett, after all, who appeared to hold the winning cards. He had successfully evaded Fenwick's efforts to obtain a cash settlement, and Captain Dabney had paid his own good money for property which Mr. Runlett now seemed justified in disposing of. In other words, these two partners owned a schooner which was unable to earn them a penny of profit.

"I wish I knew how to keep cases on that salt-water burglar," sighed Captain Joe. "His wits are sho'ly honed to a wire edge, Dudley, and I wonder if he did n't get us going and coming."

"It depends on how you qualify as a managing owner," smiled Fenwick. "But you can't expect to get business for the *Elizabeth* if Amos Runlett is strong enough to take it away from you. And he will probably try the same tactics with the other schooners you bought into. He still manages the Wetherell interest and whatever he may have saved for himself. And there is n't trade enough for all."

Through the open windows of the room in a Broadway hotel came the rumble and roar of traffic, the deep-toned voice of the city. Presently above this welter of sounds rose the shrill, incessant outcry of newsboys selling extra editions and yelling something about "WAR."

This month of August fell in the year of 1914, the reddest, saddest year in the calendar of the ages. Before the eyes of a world unwarmed and heedless, Europe was suddenly transformed into a slaughter-pit and these frantic newsboys, racing to and fro in the streets of New York, shrieked the tidings that armed Germany was about to hurl her millions of bayonets against France and Russia.

In the midst of a breathless discussion, their own affairs forgotten as of trifling import, Captain Joe Dabney exclaimed: —

"England will go in, my boy. It is life or death to her. Germany hates and fears the British Empire above everything else on sea or land. You don't have to tell me. These German shipmasters have been coming into Norfolk for years. I know 'em by the dozen. All enrolled in the naval reserve and waitin' for the word. They knew it was coming. They used to talk over their beer. The Kaiser's fleets would sweep the red rag of old England from blue water."

"Not a chance of that," said Fenwick.

"Probably not, but remember what I say," cried

Captain Joe, with prophetic vision. "Nobody knows what the effect on the world's shipping will be, but you can gamble that American vessels won't be beggin' for trade as soon as this general hell breaks loose abroad."

It was a boldly intelligent forecast which Fenwick failed to grasp at the time, nor did it seem credible during the early weeks of gigantic and confused conflict which reverberated across the Atlantic. Then slowly there emerged the fact that England and France, unready, almost beaten at the start, must be fed and supplied, to a great extent, from the ports of the United States. German merchant ships had been everywhere driven to cover, the trade routes and commerce of the globe were violently disorganized, and instead of a surplus of ships there were far too few of them. The Stars and Stripes, which had long since vanished from foreign quays and harbors, were to be seen again in a wonderful revival of maritime enterprise and prosperity.

It began to come true for Dudley Fenwick when a telegram from Norfolk informed him that Captain Joe Dabney had secured a charter for the Elizabeth Wetherell to Buenos Aires with coal and home again with manganese ore. A voyage of six or seven months and terms so astounding that Fenwick rubbed his eyes and refused to believe the figures. Twenty dollars a ton freight for the coal outbound, and sixteen dollars for the ore! One hun-

dred and eighty thousand dollars gross income, and of this a hundred and twenty thousand dollars clean profit for the owners. And there were only two of them to share it! Fenwick's dividend on a fifth interest would be twenty-four thousand dollars. His primeage as master of the vessel, five per cent of the freight, nine thousand more!

He had been wondering why Captain Joe failed to take advantage of the increase in freights coast-wise, caused by the withdrawal of tonnage for the foreign trade and the booming demand for coal among a thousand industrial plants rushed with war orders. But the new managing owner of the Elizabeth, strategically posted at Norfolk, had been biding his time and playing for bigger stakes.

There were no American vessels, in size and capacity, to compare with these splendid six-masted schooners. Desperate was the need for them, an emergency unforeseen, and they were harkening to the call of the offshore wind. Offshore! Old times come again! Tall spars heeling to the sweep of the trades, and white canvas spread in climes exotic and remote! No more driving through snow and fog past shoal and cape in voyaging down east, but a nobler, more thrilling destiny, recalling the matchless epic of deep water which American ships and sailors had lived and achieved when their nation was young.

It meant a golden fortune for Dudley Fenwick,

beyond his wildest dreams, and it likewise meant more grievous punishment for Amos Runlett, unhappiness perhaps greater than to be jeered at by Ellery H. Titus or despised by the girl whom he had foolishly aspired to marry. He would be enriched, in a degree, by this dazzling foreign commerce, and yet he might have gained ever so much more wealth had he still possessed the schooner shares which Captain Joe Dabney now owned.

He had thought himself shrewd, also, in obtaining contracts, with two years to run, for several of the vessels in which he was most heavily interested. There was no way of breaking these contracts at a beggarly sixty cents a ton for coal coastwise, and he saw himself compelled to sit and watch them cost him hundreds of thousands of dollars in profits. There was now no room for doubt that fortune had handsomely and thoroughly whip-sawed him.

When he encountered Dudley Fenwick in Spring Haven, the interview was not so hostile as might have been expected.

“Congratulations, young man,” was the brisk greeting. “Going to sea again, I hear.”

“For one voyage, Mr. Runlett, and then I hope the shipyard will be building them again.”

“Wooden schooners? I doubt it. Still, that property of yours may be worth something. Mortgaged to the bank, is n’t it? I might be willing to take it off your hands.”

"Thank you," replied Fenwick, with a laugh. "I can handle the mortgage myself. Ellery Titus tells me you had some notion of buying it before he blocked your scheme to control the bank. A factory site with a deep-water frontage? Was that the idea? Or was the mortgage to be used as a club to hold over my head?"

"Why not let bygones be bygones?" suggested Amos Runlett. "You can afford to. You have played the mischief with me from start to finish."

"And how was that?" inquired Fenwick, enjoying the scene.

"Well, you gave me your word that you stood alone — that you had turned down that cussed Joe Dabney's backing. Confound him, he was after my scalp all the time, and he lifted it! I found it out when the Elizabeth Wetherell changed hands, and I presume he was responsible for all the other devilment with my schooners. You were not straight with me, Fenwick."

This was highly amusing, and the young shipmaster exclaimed:—

"Captain Dabney worked on his own account, so far as I know. I advised *you* to steer a straight course, and you piled yourself up on the rocks. Don't try to blame me."

"Eh? What's this nonsense about Captain William Dodge and a message from Davy Jones's locker?"

"Frightened you, did it? What is the use of showing it to you now? Every dollar you lose during the next year will hurt you more than anything I can say or do. I kept faith and asked nobody to help me. I did n't even know that Captain Dabney owned in the Elizabeth until he offered me the command."

"Offered you the command after that voyage to Cuba?" sneered Amos Runlett. "A fine recommendation! Whatever it was that happened to you, you must have been ashamed of it, for Wesley Ama-zeen and his men did their best to cover it up."

This was an unfortunate speech. Fenwick's sense of injury boiled to the surface and he thought only of what he and others had suffered.

"It makes no difference now," said he, sternly indignant. "Those friends of mine tried to protect my good name as a shipmaster. It was mutiny, and almost murder, and good seamen fugitives with blood on their hands, all because your course was crooked, Amos Runlett."

"But what did I do to stir up mutiny and all this high tragedy?" was the genuinely puzzled query.

"The damage is done, and dollars can't mend it. Did it pay you, in the long run? Think that over. It is your responsibility."

Mr. Runlett's impulse was to refer to that disquieting message from Captain William Dodge and seek the explanation which had not yet been vouchsafed him, but a curious reluctance constrained him.

He was afraid to stir the troubled waters, hesitant to provoke revelations which Fenwick seemed willing to withhold. It was in truth a wiser retribution to leave him with his conjectures unsolved, his uneasy surmises harassing him. In this manner he parted from the shipmaster who had sailed the Elizabeth Wetherell for him.

Fenwick was standing at the shipyard gate with Wesley Amazeen when there loomed in the lane a bulky figure toiling under the burden of two large valises. He paused to set them down and fanned himself with a derby hat. The bald dome of Alfred, the sea-cook, shone in the sunlight. Again advancing, he began to talk as soon as he was within hailing distance, addressing himself to Wesley Amazeen.

"You scared me dumb and silent aboard ship, but there's limits to mortal endurance, and from now on the language flows out of me same as usual. I am reportin' to Cap'n Fenwick, understand, and ready to sign on for a South American voyage."

"He just now asked me to go as mate, you fat pot-wrestler," grinned Wesley.

"He did n't! Then I stay ashore!" violently ejaculated Alfred. "You and me can never be shipmates again under no circumstances whatever."

"Nonsense!" said Fenwick. "Captain Amazeen is joking. He is needed at home in the yard. Where did you come from? I could find no trace of you in Machiasport."

"Shipped in a little schooner bound to Tampa for lumber and was dismasted and waterlogged off Hatteras on the way back. Seemed sort of natural to be wrecked some more. Landed yesterday and read about the *Elizabeth's* sky-hootin' charter, bought clothes with my wages, and here I am."

"You can buy more clothes, Alfred," announced Fenwick. "Five thousand dollars worth, if you like. It is your 'big money,' and you can have it or leave it in the bank."

The astounded cook fell against the gate, gasped, closed his eyes, and again fanned himself. Reviving, he tremulously exclaimed:—

"I ain't as young as I was, Cap'n Fenwick, and I've just been shipwrecked, as I say. Nervous shocks upset me easy. What good is five thousand dollars to me? Like as not I'd buy an automobile and break my fool neck instead of bein' drownded at sea, which is a respectable performance. Keep it and don't let me spend anything but the interest of it for fancy vests and patent-leather shoes. It's sinful, ain't it, for a cook to be as rich as that! All for a triflin' matter of fetchin' a foundered schooner into port."

"Choke him off, Dudley," objected Wesley Ama-zeen. "He's limbered up again and worse'n ever for givin' his tongue a rest."

Toward the end of his last day in Spring Haven, Fenwick appeared to have no other occupation than

strolling, with a notably preoccupied air, in front of the public library. His face brightened quite wonderfully when Kate Eldredge came out, and she, in her turn, was certainly not displeased. They walked past the boarding-house and took the road to Brigantine Hill. This was Fenwick's suggestion, nor did he know that she had climbed this same hill with Amos Runlett. To the girl the place was hallowed, in a way, for she had tried to be of service to Dudley Fenwick when he stood in need of friends.

They halted to gaze down at the shipyard. Upon the marine railway stood the largest of the three schooners which the son had inherited from his father.

"The Ulysses S. Grant," said he, — "the vessel I went to sea in as mate to learn the trade. You have met her skipper, Sam Pickering, gruff and sour and always expecting hard luck. He is almost cheerful for once because he will be going offshore before long."

"It is all a miracle to me," happily replied the girl. "With freights so high on the coast, Captain Elmer Gallant is contented to jog between Bangor and New York in the *Mary Fenwick*, thanking the Lord for his mercies."

"He does n't care to cross the ocean, and it may turn out as well for him. Unless I am all wrong, the little schooners will reap a fine harvest coastwise while the big ones go offshore."

"And the little vessels deserve it so!" cried Kate, with intimate knowledge. "They have been brave and faithful, battered and starved and fighting for life."

"It means a new lease of life for them all," said Dudley. "And you will see them flocking to the Fenwick yards to make repairs long overdue. I wish I could stay and help John Moon shove the work along, but I want to make one offshore voyage in the Elizabeth, partly to get rid of the feeling that this ship is under a cloud of misfortune, partly to earn all the money I can to equip the yard for building new vessels. To retrieve my own record in her — I suppose that is the idea."

"Your record needs no repairing, Captain Fenwick," Kate warmly assured him. "I know you thought so, or you would n't have treated me almost as a stranger. A man can do no more than his best."

"But my best was not good enough for you."

"It has been worthy of a Fenwick," said she. "Is n't that enough?"

"I promised Israel to save the Fenwick yard," he replied, "and I have managed to do it, but as a shipmaster I'm not at all proud of myself."

"But I have heard a good deal more than you think I have, and I am proud of your devotion to duty. You did not fail. You would have conquered the mutiny without Wesley Amazeen's help, but you sacrificed yourself to save the mate from a bullet that was meant for him."

This seemed to afford young Captain Fenwick an extraordinary amount of comfort. The old twinkle was in his eyes as he said: —

“Bless the bullet if it bettered your opinion of me. It demands much more courage than that to tell you what I simply must say before I go to sea. I loved you the day we met in the yard, and your farewell wish is coming true. ‘Fair weather beyond the horizon,’ Kate, but it is an empty horizon without you. If I only knew that you would be waiting for me when I come back from this voyage —”

“I shall be waiting, Dudley dear,” she answered in her grave, sweet way.

She accepted him as though it had been foreordained from the beginning. There had been no need for many meetings. Implicitly they trusted each other in the sure knowledge that passeth understanding. She had believed in him and he in her, by land and sea.

When, at length, they slowly descended the green slope of the hill, Kate Eldredge looked up to say, with a sparkle of mischief: —

“Do you mind denying it again — the romance with Miss Ivy Belle Dabney, of Virginia? I suffered terribly and —”

“The daughter of a dear friend of mine,” he seriously declared, “and I merely pleaded the cause of another man.”

“I was afraid it might be a modern instance of

Priscilla and John Alden. Of course, I have your word for it, but I shall feel easier when she is actually married to this Captain Terry Cochran. And now I must be perfectly frank with you, Dudley. Amos Runlett proposed to me. Are you shocked?"

"No, but I think he was. He looks wilted and shows his age."

"He was rejected with scorn, quite like a melodrama," said she. "His character needed discipline, in my opinion."

"He got it," grimly observed Captain Fenwick, "in large, bitter doses."

"And you will be away six months," she said, a little dolefully. "We women who come of seafaring stock have learned to wait for our men, but it does seem such a long, long time."

"I would coax you to marry me now, Kate, and make a honeymoon voyage of it," he wistfully responded, "but I cannot ask my wife to go to sea with me. I can't forget Captain Dodge and his Amelia. They, too, loved each other and they preferred to die together, but when it came to the hard choice he was thinking more of his wife than of his ship."

"I have no intention of marrying you at a moment's notice, Captain Dudley Fenwick," was the spirited retort, "nor would I interfere with your professional duties. As if a man should n't love his wife more than his ship!"

"He could not love thee, dear, so much, loved he not duty more," was the response which caused her penitently to say:—

"I understand. But you will take orders from me while you are ashore? Courtesy demands that we break the news to my future mother-in-law by adoption, Aunt Mary Fenwick. Will she approve?"

"Just watch her," replied Dudley, with absolute conviction.

When they entered the parlor Aunt Mary took one long look at them, stood with hands upraised, and fervently exclaimed:—

"For the land's sake, if you two have n't gone and done it, just as Cap'n Eliner Gallant and I have been hoping for! Pity you could n't induce Dudley to speak his mind a little sooner, Kate, for folks 'll be sure to say you grabbed him for his money."

"I am going to marry him in spite of it," replied the sailor's sweetheart.

Fenwick hastened to Norfolk next day, expecting to find the big schooner without a crew and many things to attend to. One of Captain Joe Dabney's tugs dropped him at the coal-piers and he dodged across the tracks to the row of masts that lifted skyward. The Elizabeth Wetherell was loaded to her marks, the coal aboard and the hatches battened. Cleaned of dust and grime, her decks in immaculate order, she appeared ready to go to sea at the word. From the galley door Alfred waved his white apron and out

of the cabin emerged Peter Strawn, who permitted his swarthy, severe features to break into a smile. He was methodically minding his own business, as usual, and tarried not, but moved a group of sailors to another task while Fenwick climbed aboard.

“How are you, sir?” said the mate, wiping the tar from his hands. “I reported to Cap’n Dabney three days ago and he told me to fit her to tow out as soon as you turned up.”

“Glad to see you, Peter. Will you try it again in the hoodooed packet? What kind of a crew this time?”

“Scraped the alleys for ‘em, but they’ll behave. It set these Norfolk niggers to wondering when that other crew never came back.”

“No doubt of that. Has any word come back from the men we marooned?”

“I guess so. This outfit won’t admit it, but they sure do treat me respectful. You see, Gus had bragged some, before he sailed, that he was due to get me. He did n’t, I notice.”

CHAPTER XVII

"THE FENWICK YARD IS BUILDING THEM"

IT was in the spring of another year when the Elizabeth Wetherell returned to the Atlantic coast from her South American voyage and discharged her cargo of manganese ore. Safely and swiftly she had traversed many thousand miles in the offshore trade, and other cargoes were waiting. American ships had come into their own again. First aboard to welcome Dudley Fenwick was his managing owner, Captain Joseph Dabney, aglow with boyish enthusiasm, rejoicing more in the skipper's success than in his own fortunate investments. They dined in the cabin where Alfred served his famous fish chowder and beamed a fatherly benediction, singing to himself as he ambled on deck:—

"Some years ago in a ship hereabout,
I was washed overboard in a gale,
And away down below, where the seaweeds grow,
I spied a maid with a tail."

The spacious cabin was bright with sunlight and unhappy memories had ceased to haunt it. No more could this be called an unlucky ship. Fenwick read his letters from home and learned that all was well. Nothing else mattered beside the fact that bonny Kate Eldredge loved and longed for him.

"And how is Ivy Belle and what is the news from Terry Cochran?" he inquired.

"Bless yo' soul, boy, they were married three months ago," answered Captain Joe. "The terrible Terry is running my office under forced draft while I attend to the more impo'tant business of improvin' my golf score. Ivy Belle gives him all the credit for this deal in schooners. You and I know that the war saved our investment for us, but according to Ivy Belle's logic, Terry started the rumpus in Europe to boom freights on this side of the water. As a wedding present, I transferred some pieces in Wetherell schooners, and, by Jove, they are payin' this infatuated pair fifty thousand a year."

"Delighted to hear it, sir. And what are the orders for the *Elizabeth*?"

"Well, son, I hate to delay a man with a wedding of his own on hand, but instead of jumping aboa'd a train, it means only a few days for you to take the schooner to Spring Haven for repairs before she goes offshore again. It means work for yo' ship-yard. Why spend the money outside? We'll make Spring Haven the home port for the *Elizabeth* in future."

"I am greatly obliged to you, Captain Joe, and the Fenwick yard will do its very best."

"The schooner deserves the best, Dudley. I had a chance to sell her the other day. You valued her at a hundred thousand when you started the salvage

ruction with Amos Runlett. Guess what I'm offered, cash, as she stands?"

"I'm afraid to," said Fenwick, "but I'll bet you turned it down."

"Three hundred thousand, boy, and I told the broker to quit talkin' chicken feed and come back with some real money."

"Whew! What about a slump after the war? Isn't this the time to sell?"

"There will be no slump for several years, Dudley. The world will be starved for deep-sea tonnage. Look at the infernal destruction by the German submarines. And this country must feed and supply and rebuild a ruined Europe when peace does come. Confound it, you sweated and suffered to win a piece of this vessel for yo'self. It's clean, honest money. Must I look for another skipper? A thousand a month primage in it for you."

"It sounds delirious, Captain Joe, to a man raised in the coastwise trade, but you know where my heart is, with the shipyard and the girl I am going to marry. Let me take the schooner home and decide what is best to do. I planned to stay ashore, you know, and it depends on the amount of business the yard is handling."

The Elizabeth sailed for Spring Haven shortly after this, riding high and empty. Through Vineyard Sound and across Nantucket Shoals she steered with light winds until Cape Cod was rounded and it

was a straight run for the coast of Maine, that last stretch in which Captain William Dodge had been blown off to sea by a blizzard from the northeast. Fenwick thought of him and how pitiful it was that he could not have lived to command the schooner in this era of magical prosperity. A thousand dollars a month in prime, and dividends besides! How this would have thrilled and gratified the old man and his devoted Amelia! It was different with Dudley Fenwick whose joy was in winning the game.

The tide was at the flood and a strong breeze made in from sea when the towering six-master passed between the islands at the mouth of the Winnebasset River. Instead of anchoring to wait for a tug, Fenwick decided to sail up to the shipyard. Quietly the schooner moved between green fields and wooded headlands, following the deep channel which her master had known since boyhood, in the same river whence a hundred new vessels had departed during the eighty years in which an Israel Fenwick was launching them. With slackened sheets the Elizabeth Wetherell fetched clear of Christmas Point, and Spring Haven was disclosed to view.

Dudley Fenwick's eager gaze sought the gray sheds and shops of his own inheritance. *Ah, they were building them again!* Upon the sloping row of keel-blocks which led to the water's edge stood the graceful hull of a four-master, a Fenwick model whose oak frames were half-covered with planking. The

stagings swarmed with artisans and, faint and clear, came the music of the mallets as they drove the tree-nails home. A new vessel, and John Moon was in haste to finish her for the offshore trade! Like one entranced, Dudley held the glasses to his eyes while the *Elizabeth* drew abreast of the busy shipyard and Peter Strawn gave the orders to lower sail and drop an anchor.

"We will warp her in to the wharf after a while," said Captain Fenwick, his voice unsteady. "For Heaven's sake, hustle that launch into the water and let me get ashore!"

"A fine new schooner yonder," remarked the stoical mate. "A handier size than this for going deep-water. Does you good to see her, Cap'n."

"The greatest sight in the world for me, Peter."

Alfred had emerged to contradict this statement. "I dunno about that," said he. "There's some folks on the wharf and one of 'em is wavin' a handkerchief."

Dudley saw them at the same instant, the dear vision of Kate Eldredge and her fluttering signal, a little removed from Wesley Amazeen and John Moon, Aunt Mary Fenwick and President Ellery H. Titus, of the Spring Haven National Bank. Talking to himself and wholly unabashed, the cook observed:—

"I was barkin' up the wrong tree when I suspected him of designs on that Norfolk heiress. Well, the wisest of us guess wrong every so often."

Dudley was over the side and into the launch at risk of his neck. Presently he leaped for the wharf and the friendly audience displayed its discretion by staring intently at the Elizabeth Wetherell while the young shipmaster gathered into his strong arms the girl who had been parted from him through weary months, with the wide seas between them.

"Home to you, my Kate," he whispered.

"And all your hopes and mine come true," she answered. "You need n't hold me as if I intended to run away. I am visiting Aunt Mary Fenwick, right at the shipyard gate."

He turned to kiss the elderly spinster who had been like a mother to him.

Wesley Amazeen was tugging at his arm, beseeching him to look at the "hellish new schooner on the stocks."

"And more to come, Dudley!" he shouted in stentorian tones. "Three more vessels ordered as fast as we can turn 'em out. We'll have this one in the water in sixty days."

"Who are you building her for?" cried Dudley, trying to make himself heard, for they were all talking at once.

"This one? Money raised right here in town. The men in the yard own in her. Ask Ellery H. Titus. He was the leadin' spirit."

Grandly the banker took the centre of the stage, one hand in his pocket as if groping for an apple.

"It was fitting, Dudley, that local enterprise should finance this first new vessel to leave the Fenwick yard. Your fellow citizens of Spring Haven were anxious to join me in the undertaking. I have reserved a piece for you, and the bank will be pleased to carry it until you are prepared to take it over. In any event, it is our desire that you shall act as managing owner."

"Then she will be named the Anne Dudley, and Wesley Amazeen goes as master," jubilantly announced Fenwick. "And I'll see that he owns in her as a slight token of my esteem."

"And sail her on shares?" trumpeted Captain Amazeen. "You are too infernally generous, Dudley. You don't realize what it means. Tell him, John Moon. It's kind of hard for me to say anythin'."

The gnarled old foreman of the yard stepped forward, a hand upon Dudley's shoulder as he said:—

"It's beyond all reason. This vessel is already chartered, and I aim to launch her rigged and sails bent, ready to h'ist and away. *She will pay for herself on the first voyage.* Sixty thousand dollars for a freight to Lisbon, and that's what she'll cost when we put her overboard."

"Why, on half shares, Dudley," roared Wesley Amazeen, dancing a rheumatic jig-step, "I stand to earn enough to keep me in comfort the rest of my life."

"Why should n't you? Who has a better right?" smiled the young man. "What has become of our two old schooners? Are things breaking right for them?"

"Are they? All that worries them two hard-shell skippers is the income tax. Elmer Gallant is bringin' coal from Norfolk, now that the big schooners are offshore. And he drags down three dollars a ton, Dudley. He'd spend it all on the women-folks at home if Kate Eldredge wa'n't real severe with him."

"And Sam Pickering in the Grant? What about him, Wesley?"

"He's crusty, but he has to laugh in spite of himself. We had a few fingers of Old Medford together before he sailed from Boston for the west coast of Africy with general merchandise. He stocked fifty-four thousand dollars, paid in advance, and your share of the plunder is in the bank."

They were walking toward the gate of the yard and Fenwick perceived that there was to be no precious interview with Kate until after John Moon had conducted him into the little office building for a formal accounting of his stewardship.

"It's not the first time I have waited 'hove to' in the yard!" exclaimed Kate, reading her lover's impatience. "A good omen, Dudley."

Ellery H. Titus, as an owner of the new schooner, was invited to the conference. Dudley Fenwick sat at his father's desk and descried through the window the tall prow of the four-master and the workmen cunningly fitting the planks with the tools of their ancient handicraft.

"Remember what you told us that day, after the funeral?" said the round-shouldered foreman. "Israel had made you promise to stick to the yard, and you guessed that perhaps he could see farther than us, being so near the dark voyage."

"I believed it, John," was the earnest assurance, "and it may have given me courage to hang on when other people called me a fool. Have they begun to build them in the other old yards along the coast?"

"Yes, at Bath, and Rockland, and Thomaston, but we'll get more orders than any of 'em. Fenwick vessels always had a good name, and it's generally understood that you expect to take hold yourself."

"To help you, John, not to interfere with the foreman who built vessels under Israel Fenwick for thirty-odd years. Ease up and let me shoulder the hard work. Why not lay down another set of blocks and build two schooners at once?"

"Too hefty for me to tackle alone, Dudley, but you carry the steam to handle it."

"You need not hesitate for lack of ready capital," interposed Ellery H. Titus. "Personally and through the bank I can facilitate any desired expansion of the yard to fill orders."

"Thank you sir," replied Fenwick, with a grateful smile. "I can swing it myself, I think. Money seems to be piling in as if it was dumped through a coal-chute. I was very grateful, as you know, for that loan when I had no credit or security."

“A small favor, inspired by friendship and respect for your father,” suavely returned Mr. Titus, conveniently forgetting the intervention of Terry Cochran.

He clasped his hands against the rotund waistcoat and continued:—

“I shall exert my influence to have you elected a director of the Spring Haven National Bank at the earliest opportunity.”

Old John Moon, who included plain speech among his other rugged virtues, was moved to remark:—

“It makes a difference, hey, Ellery? Not long since his checks were no good and all hands sayin’ hard things of him.”

Dudley Fenwick was turning the pages of one of the account-books in which his father had entered the earnings and expenses of the schooner *Mary Fenwick*, Captain Elmer Gallant, balanced at the end of every voyage. On a fresh page, in John Moon’s heavy penmanship, was recorded the latest settlement, share and share alike, and as much to the credit of the chubby skipper for a single month as he had previously earned in a year. After all, there was profound satisfaction to be won from this amazing rejuvenation of the American sailing vessel, for it brought reward to the men who justly merited it. Better and cleaner and finer success than the speculations of “big business” ashore which Amos Runlett had vainly endeavored to imitate!

Shortly before the wedding a fortnight later, Fenwick went to Portland in search of a master for the Elizabeth Wetherell. By chance he encountered in the railroad waiting-room a man whom he failed, for the moment, to recognize as his elder brother, Israel Charles. Health restored, he had lost the aspect of shabby futility, and the resemblance to his solid father was not so weak and blurred. With a smile more friendly than sullen, he offered his hand to Dudley and exclaimed:—

“I was on my way to Spring Haven to look you up. I’m as sound as a nut, the doctors say, and discharged as cured. It was a long pull.”

“Docked for repairs in time, did you, Charlie? Glad of it,” was the cordial reply. “I suppose you hate me more than ever, with all this prosperity. Do you plan to put up a fight to make me divide the Fenwick estate?”

“No rough stuff, Dud. It’s all off. I have been living among some decent people in that sanitarium up in the woods, a couple of them from Spring Haven. They tipped me off to the gossip about you last year, when I put over that bum check for eight hundred. Sewed you up in bad shape — a pretty rotten scandal and the shipyard had to close down. I slammed you one between the eyes, all right. You could ‘have squealed on me and cleared yourself, but you did n’t. You stood the gaff. That helped to change my opinion of you. And it put me wise to the fact that

you told me the truth about the estate. There was nothing to divide. Losing that eight hundred broke you."

"It did that, Charlie, but I couldn't turn you adrift. What's the proposition now?"

"A job, Dud. I don't want your money. It would choke me. My wife says you're rich and ought to split with us, but nothing doing with me. I owe you eight hundred. What about that?"

"Marked off to profit and loss," said Dudley. "Salvage, are you, Charlie? This is ever so much bigger than bringing the Elizabeth Wetherell into port. Yes, I will give you a job and try you out. If you make good, I'll push you ahead. As I remember it, you are a fair book-keeper."

"My one best bet. And I know something about shipping."

"I shall have to organize an office force," explained Dudley. "Better come to my wedding on Thursday and look for a house to live in. It would make Israel happy to know you are coming back to work in the yard."

"If you hadn't behaved like a thoroughbred, I'd be doing time in jail," said the elder brother.

"All forgotten, Charlie. It's the course that lies ahead, not the reefs that you missed astern."

A master was found for the Elizabeth and Peter Strawn was contented to go as mate, although Fenwick argued that he should stay ashore and study

navigation with a view to commanding a new Fenwick schooner some day.

"No head for books," replied the faithful shipmate. "I don't want to be a skipper. Too much responsibility — not enough work."

Alfred, also, with five thousand dollars of "big money" in the bank, elected to go in the six-master and resume his eternal toil in the galley. It was during the last evening before the wedding in the old Fenwick house that this most amiable of sea-cooks rested his fat arms upon the schooner's rail and pensively gazed shoreward. The spirit of romance stirred in his heart, and as the mate passed him on an errand of duty, he sighed and murmured:—

"Growin' old and nobody cares, Mr. Strawn. There was a girl once — I met her after the *Lizzie B. Spencer* ketch'd fire at sea and I was rescued off a raft, but what's the use? I'm happy just watchin' the young folks get what they want."

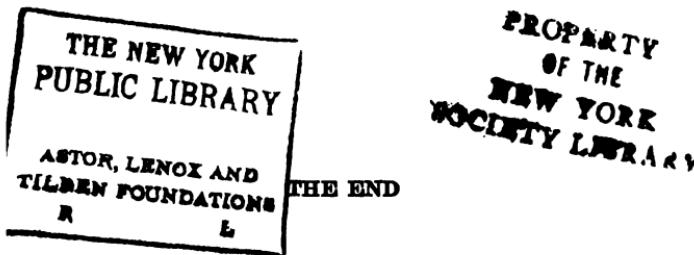
"Cap'n Fenwick and his sweetheart?" growled Peter Strawn. "Take it from me, Alfred, nothing is too good for 'em."

Back to his pots and pans trudged the cook, and a little later in the evening Dudley Fenwick and Kate Eldredge wandered through the shipyard gate and, hand in hand, paused beside the new schooner on the stocks whose shadowy bulk rose far above them. At the wharf loomed the *Elizabeth Wetherell*, huge and black, her masts soaring in austere simplicity of

utline, soon to spread tall canvas to the offshore
inds.

"Are you sure you won't be sorry to see her go
ithout you?" anxiously murmured the girl.

"She was a lucky ship, after all," he answered,
but another man must take her out and I am glad
to give him the chance. Here is where I belong, for
he Fenwick yard is building them again."



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